Sustaining Inclusive Education in K–12 Schools:

A Framework for Design, Implementation and Analysis of Inclusive Practices

by

Lakshmi Balasubramanian

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree of

Joint Doctor of Philosophy
with San Francisco State University

in

Special Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Laura Sterponi, Co-chair
Professor Pamela Wolfberg, Co-chair
Professor Susan Schweik

Spring 2021

Abstract

Sustaining Inclusive Education in K–12 Schools:
A Framework for Design, Implementation and Analysis of Inclusive Practices

by

Lakshmi Balasubramanian

Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Laura Sterponi and Professor Pamela Wolfberg, Co-chairs

This dissertation research aimed to examine the processes and practices of inclusive education for students with diverse disabilities in a school district in northern California. The first part is a theoretical articulation of a conceptual framework that school districts and local education agencies can use to design, implement, and sustain inclusive educational practices. This framework has three central tenets, which relate to (a) how students access general education, (b) meaningful ways in which they can participate alongside their peers, and (c) support structures that can undergird effective implementation. The second part of this dissertation consists of an empirical study that evaluated the deployment of this framework in implementing inclusive education in the kindergarten-through-12th-grade context. It brought under scrutiny the system-level processes and programmatic structures that were in place or being developed at this school district. Facilitators and barriers to inclusion were examined as they related to access, meaningful participation, and creation and provision of supports for all participants within their sociocultural context. I make visible the ableist and disablist discourses and practices that sometimes frame the construction of disability and what it means to teach or parent a child with a disability within those confines. In this way, this dissertation untangles the oppressive ideologies that are prevalent in narratives about the disabled and destabilizes any claims made to a normative ideal, while affirming that inclusion and receiving education in the least restrictive environment is a civil right for disabled students.

Dedication

To my students, their parents, and the teachers and staff that I have had the privilege of working with: Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey.

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Adriana Loes Schuler

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AAC	augmentative and alternative communication
ADA	average daily attendance
AT	assistive technology
CA	California
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DOE	Department of Education
FAPE	free and appropriate public education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	individualized education program
K–1	kindergarten through first grade
K–3	kindergarten through third grade
K–12	kindergarten through 12th grade
LEA	local education agency
LRE	least restrictive environment
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MTSS	multitiered system of support
NAEYC	National Association for Educating Young Children
NEUSD	North East Unified School District (pseudonym)
NLTS2	National Longitudinal Transition Survey, Wave 2
NPDCI	National Professional Development Center on Inclusion
PL	Public Law
PLC	professional learning community
RCT	randomized controlled trial
SAI	specialized academic instruction
SDC	special day class
UD	universal design
UDL	universal design for learning
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
U.S.	United States
USAF	United States Air Force

List of Figures and Tables

Acknowledgments

Throughout this dissertation, the members of my committee have always given me thoughtful advice, encouragement, and support. I thank Professor Laura Sterponi for being a mentor and my teacher and for instilling in me the analytical rigor that helped me move forward with this work. She has been incredibly generous with her time, always willing to hold my hand as I traversed unchartered territory as a student, researcher, and practitioner. No question was too small or insignificant. She has been a model scholar and mentor and has been there for me both professionally and personally. It has been a privilege and honor to learn from her, a gifted teacher who is warm and humble and guided me to expand my thinking in more ways than I can express. I am forever grateful to Professor Pamela Wolfberg for always encouraging me to run with my ideas, for being a thought partner and collaborator, and for providing me with a safe space that was nurturing to learn and flourish. She, too, has been a model scholar and someone I hope to emulate as I "grow up" in the field. I had worked with Pamela previously, so the prospect of being her advisee drew me to this program. Professor Susan Schweik has been a source of inspiration, learning, and growth. She helped me navigate ideas and pushed the boundaries of my thinking. I appreciate the times I spent learning from her and am grateful for all the scholarly works to which she introduced me. I was fortunate to have the support and mentorship of many world-renowned professors. I am grateful and attribute much of my success and learning to each one of them: Dr. Gloria Soto, Dr. Pam Hunt, Dr. Anne Cunningham, Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski, and Dr. Kathleen Mortier.

This research was conducted at schools where I learned my craft of designing inclusive education programs. I thank all the staff, students, and families within each school that allowed me to learn and grow as a practitioner and inspired me to do this research. I especially want to thank Karen Russell, Jennifer Casey, Murriel Evans, Christina Arroyo, John Honerkamp, Jasmine Zartman, Frances English, and Carli Kim for the many thoughtful conversations. I am very grateful to Glynis Mason, Cheri Gholston, and Kanaka Kannan for encouraging and allowing me to have those intellectually stimulating discussions, which always helped me stay connected to what the schools and students needed. To my colleagues and classmates at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State, thank you for helping me stay grounded—special thanks to Renee Starowicz, Alexander Blum, Danielle Flemming, Dorcas Yap, Kristen Stewart, and Robin Irey. To my editor, Donna—you helped me pull this together and made this last leg of the journey fun and exhilarating.

I would not be where I am today without the love and encouragement my parents gave me. I love and respect them and owe them a debt of gratitude. To my mother-in-law Vasantha, who was always curious about my work and with whom I have had long conversations about it, thank you for being supportive. None of this would have been possible without my two beautiful children—Kaavya and Pranav—whom I adore. They are the reason I want to continue doing what I do. And to my husband, Chandra, who has been my rock. He has been unwavering in his support and has always believed in my ability even more than I did. Last and certainly not the least, the two latest additions to our family, my puppies Alaska and Kyra—whose affection, hugs, and kisses kept me happy and productive through it all.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methods

Introduction

L. P. Hartley's (1954) words, "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (p. 3), may aptly apply to the history—and future—of inclusive practices in education. *Inclusive practices* refer to "including" disabled children in general education classrooms and, over time, have been implemented in many ways. Educators discuss inclusion as an "opportunity" that allows disabled students, who were typically placed in segregated settings, at least some interactions with typical peers. This conversation may satisfy a legal requirement for the school but is rooted in the deficit model, which seeks to diagnose, treat, or cure a problem.

Statement of the Problem

This deficit model is a problematic approach to inclusion. It essentializes disabled students as being a sum of their deficits. It bypasses other models of implementation that are situated instead in strength-based perspectives and that view the disability as resulting from barriers that society erected. Traditional models of special education place a diagnostic label on the student, making it appear as if the problem resides within the student and thereby letting society off the hook.

I aspire to change that narrative. I see equity for all students as ensuring equal opportunity, fair treatment, and access to education and resources. This is possible only in an environment built on respect and dignity. Inclusion fosters a culture of belonging by actively seeking and valuing the participation and contribution of all students and allowing social relationships to flourish and grow. These commitments led me to the research portrayed in this dissertation.

Background

Federal law requires school districts and local education agencies (LEAs) to provide students who have disabilities with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Students Act in 1975 was a watershed event. This law guaranteed that students with disabilities aged 3 to 21 years could receive a FAPE, with an emphasis on special education services and related supports designed to meet their unique needs. The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA], 2004) in 1990 and its subsequent amendments placed increased emphasis on providing students with disabilities with access to the general education curriculum and on accountability as it relates to their achievement.

The idea that students should receive their education in the LRE had been established in 1975. However, delivery of special education service still varies widely from school to school and district to district. Although students with disabilities should receive their education alongside their peers in general education settings (the LRE), this is not always the case. Oftentimes, the law's requirement that students with disabilities be educated in the LRE to the maximum extent appropriate is used as an argument against their inclusion in general education. For instance, a school or district may claim to have tried and tested students in a general education setting "to the maximum extent possible," but now it is time to move them to a segregated setting.

What is implied at many individualized education program (IEP) meetings is that students with disabilities are distinctly different from their "typical" peers and require specialized services and interventions that can be provided only in separate settings (Schifter & Hehir, 2018). This

manner of thinking further professionalizes the providers working with disabled students as experts who know more about disabled students' "troubles" (as some providers termed in their interviews) than do the students or their parents. In this manner, structural systems and culture further disable students who struggle to succeed within the schools.

Article 24 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2008) directs its member states and signatories to "maximize academic and social development consistent with the goal of full inclusion" (para. 23) for disabled students. Whereas identification and eligibility for special education are still rooted in medical and scientific frameworks, I—like other scholars and disability justice advocates—seek to reframe disability within its social, historical, and cultural contexts (e.g., Van der Klift & Kunc, 2017). I believe that disability is a natural part of who we are and that it rests at the intersection of individuals and their environments (D. H. Rose & Meyer, 2002). With such a mindset, we as educators can alter our views of student ability as an issue of access versus deficit (Dudley-Marling, 2004).

Research Goals and Questions

This dissertation research aims to examine the processes and practices of inclusive education for students with diverse disabilities in a school district in northern California. The IDEA (2004) mandates that students with disabilities should receive a FAPE in the LRE to the greatest extent possible. The law further stipulates that a student must be removed from general education settings only if the student's needs cannot be met with supplemental aids and services (IDEA, 2004, Section 612(5)(a)). A systematic review of 280 studies from 25 countries yielded relevant scientific evidence demonstrating that inclusive education provides long- and short-term gains for students with and without disabilities (Hehir et al., 2016). In the United States, there is a national focus on inclusive education practice and research that is grounded in federal and state law and in annual requirements from Congress that instruct LEAs to report on their LRE statistics (Section 618). However, inclusion is still a hotly contested topic, with many scholars in research and practice advocating for specialized settings for students with disabilities (Gilmour, 2018a; Gilmour et al., 2018).

Even the conceptual definition of inclusion is debated. Definitions range from physical placement in general education settings to transformation of school systems to cater to the needs of all students (Kozleski et al., 2009). Inclusive education is about access to the general education curriculum and participation, acceptance, and achievement within those contexts. In practice, however, multiple narratives and truths surround its implementation. Examining the history of special education reveals that it was created as a parallel system (Kanter & Ferri, 2013), which then led to quandaries relating to allotment of resources, professional preparation, and barriers that prevented disabled students from accessing general education settings. Although inclusive education aims to specifically address this issue of segregation for all students, it is still viewed as a special education initiative (Kozleski et al., 2009).

Given these historical and pragmatic complexities and the increasing impact of accountability reforms on education—and specifically on students with disabilities—this study aims to examine the ways in which practitioners, families, and school districts construct and sustain inclusive practices in a school district in northern California.

Three research questions guided this study:

- What system-level processes and programmatic structures are needed to construct and sustain inclusive practices?
- What professional learning opportunities, curricular approaches, and collaborative processes are needed to construct and sustain inclusive practices?
- What potential barriers do policies, narratives, assumptions, and spaces (physical and virtual) about ability and disability in the schools create?

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two parts. The first part proposes a conceptual framework that kindergarten-through-12th-grade (K–12) institutions can use to design, implement, and sustain inclusive education practices. The second part is an empirical study that examines the implementation of inclusive education at the North East Unified School District (NEUSD; pseudonym), a K–12 school system that serves 35,000 students in a large suburb of northern California.

In this dissertation, I articulate a framework for implementing inclusive education in public school settings. In Chapter 2, I delve into the research literature, examine the debates surrounding inclusive education, and synthesize what the literature puts forth as essential to implement inclusive practices. Further, the chapter examines theoretical underpinnings to establish a conceptual framework for building inclusive education practices in K–12 settings. The final part of Chapter 2 is an in-depth analysis and proposal for the central tenets of the framework.

The second half of this dissertation is an empirical study. I set out to gain an in-depth understanding of how inclusive practices are built and supported within school districts and LEAs. For that reason, I examined the system-level processes, programmatic structures, and supports that were envisioned and deployed within the NEUSD in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

Definition of Terms

There appears to be a lack of common understanding or definition of the multitude of terms used when referring to inclusive education. For instance, the terms *inclusion*, *full inclusion*, and *mainstreaming* are often used interchangeably. I here clarify the difference between inclusion and mainstreaming.

Inclusion. The term *inclusion* gained importance with the 1990 passage of amendments to the IDEA (formerly, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975). The IDEA required schools to provide a FAPE in the LRE, interpreted as being the general education classroom at the neighborhood school (Osgood, 2005). Inclusion refers to the commitment to educate every child in the classroom and school they would attend if they were not disabled. It brings the support services, where available, to the child rather than moving the child to a setting (e.g., special day classes [SDCs]). Inclusion operates on the belief that the child benefits from being in the class and does not require that the child keep up with other students.

Mainstreaming. *Mainstreaming* was a term used to indicate inclusion prior to the passage of IDEA. It refers to the selective placement of individuals with disabilities in general education classrooms for a certain time, after which they would return to their segregated classroom.

Methods

In this section, I describe the research site, participants, methodology, data collection procedures, and analytic frames I used to conduct this study.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study used an overall qualitative design, with data generated through participant observational ethnographic methods, interviews, semi-structured group discussions, and document analysis. The rationale for selecting this design stemmed from the utility of qualitative research methods when studying educational interventions or initiatives that are situated, locally constructed, and continually adjusted by the participants in a process that is mutually engaging and interactive (Kozleski, 2017). These methods allowed me to excavate and situate the practices in their sociocultural contexts while highlighting the role that culture plays in mediating the everyday lives of students, parents, and staff within these inclusive programs and classrooms.

A researcher's ability to demonstrate credible findings helps to add value to a research study. Qualitative researchers are sometimes criticized for the lack of reliability and validity of their findings. *Reliability* concerns a finding's replicability, whereas *validity* concerns its accuracy. To address the reliability of the findings that I present in this work, I consider five major problems that LeCompte and Goetz (1982) asked researchers to address: (a) researcher role and position, (b) informant selection, (c) social situations and conditions, (d) methods of data collection, and (e) analytic frames used for treatment of the data. In response, I

(a) Clarify my role as a researcher and participant observer in my positionality statement. I was in my fieldsite first as a participant, and then adopted the role of participant observer when the plans for my study crystallized. In the positionality statement, as well as in the subsequent analytic frames, I articulate my investigative stance, describe my social status and position within the group, and delineate its development.

(b) Describe in careful detail the informants with whom I worked to collect the data. In ensuring a wide variety of perspectives, I invited and spoke to many participants with diverging ideas, perspectives, and views about inclusive education. I worked with a variety of stakeholder groups (teachers, administrators, paraeducators, and parents) and, by virtue of my institutional role, participated in a wide range of contexts and settings.

(c) Detail the social situations and contexts in which the data were collected because the context can influence what is shared or observed (LaCompte & Goetz, 1982). I articulate who was present, when, and in what situation information was shared, as well as under what circumstances participants wanted to share data. By explicating a conceptual framework and using that as the frame for my data analysis and treatment procedures, I clearly delineate the constructs and analytical units while identifying the theories and assumptions that undergird the conceptual and analytic frame of my research.

(d) Provide a detailed description of the data collection procedures to serve as an "operating manual," as LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 39) recommended.

(e) Use a system of data collection to address threats to reliability of the data. This system included fieldnotes with low inference descriptions followed by interpretive commentary. I also asked clarifying questions related to my observations as a

participant observer and recorded those using a digital voice recorder. Additionally, I maintained a reflective journal in which I recorded my thoughts, interpretations, introspections, questions, and comments while I engaged in the data collection process. Examination of this combination of observations, fieldnotes, reflective journal memos, (recorded) interviews, (recorded) semi-structured group discussions, written communications, and material artifacts corroborated and triangulated the themes and findings that emerged during data analysis.

My work as a special education teacher and inclusion specialist within the NEUSD required me to attend strategic and tactical meetings; consult with and support general education teachers, special education teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and parents; and teach classes at various levels. I wrote fieldnotes and memoranda following my work; I collected data about the schools' and district office's organizational structures, social and academic activities in which participants engaged, symbolic and material artifacts that participants shared during the interviews and discussions, and interpretative exercises in which members who participated in the inclusive education programs engaged. When writing fieldnotes, I documented what I observed or engaged in and wrote reflective commentary about the observations. This allowed me to juxtapose my initial interpretations of the incident or situation and my subjective stance, including, at times, my emotional reactions and attitudes (political, moral, and theoretical). I did this in the hope of recording data that had an insider perspective, given that I was also enacting my institutional role within the district while conducting the research (Duranti, 1997).

Because I was not a peripheral observer but an active participant with an institutionalized role, these reflective observer comments play a role in the data analysis. In this dissertation, I attempt to engage in a conversation between the various points of view depicted in this research. The participants' viewpoints and the stances adopted within the research literature by activists for disabled students may appear at some times complementary and at other times contradictory. In my fieldnotes, I portray the dialog in which participants engaged among themselves and on occasion with me. In documenting these dialogs and conversations as such, I elevate the participants' voices, providing direct access to how these members characterized their own actions and thoughts.

I interviewed general education and special education teachers, administrators, paraeducators, and parents to obtain their concerns, opinions, suggestions, and strategies, as well as detailed information about aspects of the programs. I conducted semi-structured group discussions with stakeholder groups (e.g., parents of students with disabilities; general education teachers and special education teachers who participated in the inclusion program; paraeducators; district-level administrators; and other service providers, such as occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, and physical therapists). These stakeholders spoke about the various system-level processes and programmatic and support structures in place or being developed to build inclusive practices and evaluate the programs and program goals, procedures, and outcomes.

Here it is important to situate my positionality related to collecting data. Whereas ethnographers typically go into a community and become participant observers, I was a member of the community who went into higher education with the explicit intent to study inclusive education practices. Researchers such as Ochs (1988) have articulated the negotiations in which they engaged with the communities they studied, for instance requesting the community to go about its normal activity and not focus attention on the researcher's presence. I did not encounter

such situations because my membership as a teacher or inclusion specialist was already firmly established. Hence, no interactions or transactions were initiated because of my presence as a researcher amid this education community. As a researcher enmeshed with my participants, I could observe everyday patterns and analyze their repetitiveness to detect emerging constructs or themes.

Researcher Role and Positionality

My positionality as it relates to the topic of my research is influenced by my identity as a disabled woman of color, my role as the special education teacher within the district where I conducted my research, and my views about inclusive education. I am a partially blind individual with no night vision and significant loss of peripheral vision. My own educational journey affected my assumptions, opinions, and values. It afforded me the opportunity to understand how it feels to never see what is written on the blackboard (the medium used to convey all teaching). My repeated pleas were met with "open your eyes fully" or "you need new glasses." It is salient to note that I was educated in India and Dubai during the 1980s and 1990s, when accommodations for the disabled were rare, if not entirely absent. Knowledge of how I see the world has prompted people to verbalize pity or empathy, laugh awkwardly, or even increase the volume of their voice as though that would help me see better. These experiences inform my partial understanding of the reality inhabited by disabled individuals, including the students and their families who are part of my research.

I consider myself to be a strong advocate of disability rights, which propels my interest in and commitment to inclusive education. As a special education teacher, I conceptualized the model of inclusive education that is under scrutiny in this dissertation. I worked diligently at both the grassroots and the upper-management levels, advocating with the school district personnel for program funding. Hence, I have a vested interest in seeing the program continue to grow and succeed. As a doctoral student with an avid interest in inclusive education and disability rights, I place myself on the side of the debate that advocates for inclusion for all—including students with extensive support needs.

Sometimes, I feel conflicted within my many roles and responsibilities. For instance, at IEP meetings, I am expected to recommend specialized settings because the district's limited resources would, in their view, be spread "inequitably" if they sanctioned "too many" inclusive placements. At these times, the disability advocate in me wants to resist, but the directives say otherwise. Sometimes general education teachers ask me to observe students whom they feel are "inappropriately placed" in their classroom. As a teacher who has juggled the myriad responsibilities of running a classroom, I understand when teachers voice concerns over whether a child is well served in a particular setting. The answer would be to allocate more resources that are unavailable because of systemic issues. At that juncture, I have to discern whether it would be prudent to alert the parent to mobilize legal counsel and force the district to allocate what is needed or if I should succumb to the calls for help that would move the student to a setting where the resources are available. Although this conflict within the self may appear problematic at first glance, I see its utility when I can mobilize my insights to situate what may have transpired in some instances within the larger sociopolitical or historical context.

Site Description

The NEUSD, where I collected my data, is situated in northern California. The district served approximately 35,000 students; about 3,500 of them received services via the special education department (1,900 as "resource students" and 1,600 in segregated classrooms). Approximately 19% of the student population qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The school district is divided into five attendance areas, with 29 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools, and a continuation high school. The NEUSD had an ethnic diversity index of 40 (of 100 possible). This index depicts how much racial and ethnic diversity exists among enrolled students. If the student body is evenly distributed, then the ethnic diversity index is higher. For example, a school with only one race or ethnicity would have an index of 0 (Education Data Partnership, 2021). Within NEUSD, more than 60% of the student population was Asian, 11% Caucasian, 15% Latinx, and less than 1% African American and Filipino. North East Unified was considered a high-achieving school district, as evidenced by the test scores their students received on the standardized assessment data collected by the California State Department of Education (CA DOE): 88% to 90% of the student body "met" or "exceeded standards" for both Mathematics and English Language Arts (less than 12% did not meet standards for Mathematics, and less than 10% did not meet standards for English Language Arts). This district has a high school graduation rate of 94%, which exceeds the state average by 10%; 91% of its graduates met requirements for admission into the University of California and California State University systems. These statistics showcase how well "typically developing" students in this district perform.

Nevertheless, recent statistics from the State DOE indicate that this school district has failed for 3 years in a row to make adequate progress towards including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Per the California Dashboard, the district did not meet Indicator 5B, which identifies the percentage of students with IEPs who were in a regular class less than 40% of the day. Additionally, the NEUSD graduation rate for student with disabilities is 75.1% (compared to 94% for students without disabilities). In one artifact that I examined, the district outlined its "Special Education Plan" for improvement as required by the CA DOE (Artifact outlining district's plan to address LRE shortfalls to the state agency). On its page 13, it cited a root cause for this low graduation rate as "stringent graduation requirements" (enacted by the school district over and above minimum requirements enforced by the State DOE) and "high academic demands." The report also cited the students with disabilities' absenteeism as a cause for their low graduation rate.

The NEUSD has the following types of programs within its special services department: resource programs, mild-to-moderate SDCs, moderate SDCs, moderate-to-severe SDCs, and intensive-intervention SDCs. Withing these five program types, only students receiving resource support—mostly as a "pull-out" service—are members of the general education classrooms. That is, of all the students who receive special education services, only the students who receive resource programs appear on the general education roster. All NEUSD schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) have resource programs on their school sites. The other four program types, which involve SDCs, are not offered at every school but at specific predetermined sites. The location of these SDCs depends on many factors but largely on available classroom space and the site principals' willingness to house the special education programs.

Genesis of "Inclusion Programs"

I place "inclusion programs" in quotes here to demonstrate how stakeholders within the school district referred to inclusive education. As I articulate the genesis of these programs, it will become clear that stakeholders' references to them as "programs" inadvertently "othered" the disabled students. These students, who physically sat in general education classrooms, were not given true membership in these classes even though they breathed the same air as their "typically developing" peers. The staff, teachers, and parents did not *intend* to other the disabled students; however, policies far removed from everyday contexts and implementation influenced this othering.

In 2008, I was hired as a special education teacher in NEUSD. I took over a kindergarten-through-first-grade (K–1) SDC that was called an inclusion program but, in reality, aligned more with mainstreaming. The teacher whom I replaced had retired, and the school where the program was housed needed that classroom space; thus, the district moved this K–1 program to West Valley Elementary School (pseudonym). At West Valley, my students—a mix of kindergarteners and first graders—were included only in general education kindergarten classrooms. However, after I established relationships with other general education teachers, my students were also included in first grade. At the end of first grade, they had to leave West Valley. They could either return to their (neighborhood) school of residence or attend another SDC, according to the IEP team's recommendations.

I found this process unsettling. I felt as though my students were being yanked out of a school where they had built friendships and connections with the staff and students. I questioned the validity of sending students with disabilities to different programs every 2 years, depending on where such programs were housed. Many students with disabilities have goals around socialization, making friends, and building connections—and moving them every 2 years appeared to counter the point of building long-lasting relationships. I began advocating for students to stay at West Valley, but this capacity depended on considerations of classroom space, staffing, budget, and so forth.

Fortunately, a change in leadership at the district's Department of Special Education helped to establish a new vision towards providing inclusive education and to design a plan to build pilot sites that implemented inclusive programming. When I met with Ms. Jacobs, the Director of Special Education, to plan for this rollout, we discussed various implementation models. We agreed on the learning center model as the one that would work best for West Valley Elementary School. In the learning center model, four students with IEPs (who otherwise would be in mild-to-moderate SDCs) would now be included in general education classrooms (kindergarten through third grade [K–3]). These students would be added to the general education class roster, even though their numbers would exceed the class-size limit in each general education classroom. Further, the Special Education Department would provide a paraeducator to support each of these four general education classrooms, and a special education teacher would support these students and their teachers by providing direct services (specialized academic instruction [SAI]), consultation, and collaboration with each general education teacher to plan lessons that met all their needs. The special education teacher would provide in-class push-in support at least once every day for a predetermined amount of time.

This K–3 class marked the beginning of the first inclusion program to go beyond first grade, with the intention to develop new classes every year. Within that first school year, another school

site expressed interest in offering an inclusive program. At Northeastern Elementary School (pseudonym), a special education teacher and a general education teacher had partnered and asked to co-teach a classroom for transitional kindergarten students. That initiated the process to begin an inclusive program at Northeastern. Each program started with the understanding that the teams had to recruit other special education and general education teachers to partner and grow programs at that school site. In this manner, the programs at South Bay and Needham Elementary Schools (pseudonyms) were also conceptualized. These school sites implemented a mix of co-taught classrooms and learning center models. In a co-taught classroom, one special education teacher spends all of their time with their partnered general education teacher, and all of their disabled students are taught in one grade-level classroom. In the learning center model, the special education teachers divide their time between two or sometimes three classrooms. When the first group of included students graduated from West Valley Elementary, the middle school that received them then developed a program for inclusive supports.

Currently, NEUSD hosts 11 inclusive programs, that is, 11 caseloads of 10 to 12 students per caseload. All students are fully included in general education classrooms (for more than 80% of the day). The sites investigated in this dissertation are the four elementary schools (West Valley, Northeastern, South Bay, and Needham) and one middle school (Hillview; pseudonym). A student is considered fully included if they receive the majority of instruction in a general education setting with support for SAI and other related services from special education personnel. The core characteristics of the inclusion program are:

1. All teachers have received some training in universal design (UD) for learning (UDL)
2. All teachers have attended training on co-teaching strategies
3. Each general education teacher works with a special education teacher to support the students who are fully included

All students in these inclusion programs would otherwise have been placed in segregated settings or SDCs. Of the students with disabilities in these inclusion programs, 85% were classified as having mild-to-moderate needs, and 15% as having extensive or moderate-to-severe support needs. The students with moderate-to-severe needs secured a place in these programs owing to the fierce advocacy of their parents or guardians. Although inclusion should not be a "program," I use the word *program* herein because that is how the participants in this district refer to inclusion.

Data Corpus

The data used in this dissertation research includes

- Fieldnotes written after I enacted my institutional role in
    - Meetings (staff, strategic, and tactical) with teachers, administrators, paraeducators, and parents
    - Classroom teaching at elementary and secondary sites
    - Community meetings regarding inclusive education
    - Training regarding inclusive education
- Interviews (audio-recorded and transcribed) with
    - Teachers
    - Administrators (school site and district)
    - Paraeducators

    - Parents
    - Other specialists (e.g., speech pathologists and occupational therapists)
- Focus groups and semi-structured group discussions (video- or audio-recorded and transcribed) with
    - Teachers
    - Administrators
    - Paraeducators
    - Parents
    - Other specialists
- Documents shared by various participants, including
    - Adaptations, accommodations, and modifications to curriculum
    - Lesson plans
    - IEP documents
    - Meeting notes
    - Meeting agendas
    - Training agendas
    - Training materials

Data Analysis

Data collection involved all the above-listed sources, settings, and participants. I examined the data collected daily and made notations and memos to help guide the analytic process. For data treatment, I took a partially inductive approach, using the overarching tenets of the conceptual framework (access to general education, participation, and support structures to undergird inclusion), which I propose in Chapter 2, to examine the data.

The following is an example of how I created first-level codes while considering access, the first tenet proposed in the framework. I conducted the first level of analysis by summarizing the data using descriptive codes that pertain to UD features and related technological assists that increased access to the general education curriculum and setting for disabled students. This approach was partially inductive and based on what appeared in the dataset. I also coded the barriers to access that surfaced in the data, such as ableist assumptions, physical and virtual barriers, and other policy-related obstacles that families and students faced. These codes were summative in nature. They captured the salient evocative attributes of the topics that were emerging from the data and proved useful in further analysis and subsequent coding cycles.

Subsequently, I created second-level pattern codes that allowed me to bring the descriptive codes together (Elliot, 2018). For example, I created pattern codes based on the frequency or sequence with which certain acts occurred within the data. The second tenet of the conceptual framework espouses that meaningful participatory structures need to be present for disabled students. An example of first-level summary coding under this tenet was the presence of tiered intervention, instruction structures, and progress-monitoring cycles that enabled provision of the interventions. In an example second-level pattern code, I examined the similarities and differences with which these interventions, structures, and cycles were enacted in the various schools within this district and the order or sequence in which they occurred. These descriptive codes and pattern codes facilitated the development of categories and connections in the data (Saldaña, 2014).

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) advised researchers to ask themselves certain questions while coding:

> What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish? How exactly do they do this? What specific means and or strategies do they use? How do members talk about, characterize and understand what is going on? What assumptions are they making? What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? Why do I include them? (p. 44)

These questions served as a useful guide and frame while I engaged in this coding process. During this process, I also tracked my assumptions, positionality, and role as a researcher and institutional actor and the tensions that emerged with my own value systems and beliefs (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). I identified emerging themes that linked empirically to the data and to the analytic context of system-level processes, programmatic structures, and supports for inclusion.

To ensure and elevate the methodological coherence, the quality and rigor of data collection, and the ensuing analysis and interpretation, I engaged in an active and iterative process throughout the study. The elements that I outlined in this Methods section are components of a methodological framework that Johnson et al. (2020) suggested. They comprise the research questions, methods used to generate data, researcher role and positionality, context and situatedness along with the literature review, and tacit theories developed in part due to my institutional role. Additionally, the data were collected over an extended time (3.5 years) and drawn from multiple sources: video and audio recordings in various contexts (different school sites, district office, and interdistrict meetings), types of meetings (IEP, staff, team, and strategy sessions), stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, and classified staff), and textual and document analyses. The variety in sources, contexts, and settings allowed me to triangulate the data and articulate rich and thick descriptions. I used purposive sampling techniques to select participants for their expertise in the area of inclusive education or for having students who were included in general education (key informants).

Summary

By articulating disability with a mindset of access rather than deficit, I seek to influence the next generation of teachers and scholars in how they construct disability and to influence the norm towards inclusivity, as opposed to segregation, in classrooms. The conceptual framework that I propose in Chapter 2 is rooted in the assumption that variability is the norm, and that the disability results from barriers that society erected due to that impairment. Using this framework, I then examine the implementation of inclusive education at NEUSD that was shaped partly by my own work as a special education teacher and inclusion specialist. My appraisal of the framework's usefulness incorporates the perspectives of all stakeholders and participants within the district. I aim to present how students, teachers, parents, staff, and administrators built a culture of inclusivity and exclusivity as it occurred within their sociocultural contexts. In the subsequent chapters, I establish the context for my scholarship and research. Chapter 3 details system-level processes that promote or act as barriers to access, Chapter 4 delves into programmatic structures that facilitate and inhibit participation, and Chapter 5 addresses the delicate process of undergirding inclusive practices with robust supports. Finally, Chapter 6 offers an overarching summary of the findings and reflects back on the conceptual framework for theoretical and practical implications.

PART 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 2: Inclusive by Design: A Conceptual Framework to Build Inclusive Practices

> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible. (IDEA, as cited in U.S. DOE, 2010)

This chapter outlines a conceptual framework that school districts and LEAs seeking to implement inclusive programming in schools can use. The landscape of inclusive education is a fiercely debated topic; hence, understanding the rhetoric on both sides of the divide is important. I first delve into the research that presents the merits of inclusive education by those who support it. I then explore arguments presented by those against inclusion. Next, I examine studies that identify relevant elements, and I attempt to synthesize key conclusions from the various research reviews. Before delving into the final piece to building a conceptual framework, I examine crucial theoretical principles that undergird the framework. Finally, I scrutinize practices that have promise to support inclusion, drawing on the research to build a conceptual framework that would aid school districts in implementation.

Arguments for Inclusion

It has been almost 27 years since the Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education (organized by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO], 1994), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Spain, endorsed the need to promote inclusive education. The 300 participants, representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations, committed to the needed shifts in policy to ensure that all children receive access to education. Article 24 of the UNCRPD reaffirmed the urgency and obligation to provide education for all children, especially those with disabilities, within the framework of regular education (UN DESA, 2008; UNESCO, 1994).

International agreements and organizations such as the UN appear to have recognized the importance of inclusive education within the fabric of society. Inclusion assumes that children with disabilities attend the neighborhood and community schools they would have otherwise attended if not disabled and participate equitably in the opportunities and obligations of the general education setting. According to the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion ([NPDCI], 2011), effective inclusive practices constitute presumed competence, authentic membership, full participation, and reciprocal social relationships for all children with disabilities in age-appropriate general education classrooms. The NPDCI also stressed the need to provide appropriate supports for both teachers and students to allow the children to succeed. These practices require thoughtful planning and stakeholder engagement in collaborative inquiry at the LEA.

This change is a paradigm shift: It implies that schools need to be developed with an inclusive vision and mindset as opposed to integrating vulnerable populations into existing systems or arrangements (Kozleski & Artiles, 2012). This notion reflects societal values of promoting

opportunities for development, learning, and sense of belonging. It echoes a reaction to the contradiction of practices that supported segregating students with disabilities in SDCs. As Kozleski et al. (2014) pointed out, the global inclusive education movement came about as a response to the practice of systemically excluding children considered "different" (e.g., English language learners or with disabilities) from accessing and participating meaningfully in education.

Inclusion has been advocated for over 30 years. However, according to statistics from the U.S. Data Accountability Center (McFarland et al., 2017), approximately 40% of students with special education needs spend significant amounts of time outside of general education classrooms. This comes despite extensive research (e.g., Daniel & King, 1997; McDonnell et al., 2003; Turnbull et al., 2007) supporting the benefits of inclusive education, as detailed in the upcoming paragraphs. These statistics suggest that special education policy implementation and service delivery are still based on segregated models—even though research supports the education of children with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers.

Those who advocate for inclusive education cited the important strides and significant developmental and learning progress that children with disabilities make in regular education settings compared to their progress in segregated settings (Odom, 2000; Strain & Bovey, 2011). They also noted the positive impact it has on children without disabilities in intangible areas such as empathy and social cognition (Hehir & Katzman, 2012). Researchers have examined the efficacy of research pertaining to inclusion from a variety of vantage points. In the following section, I review some studies that examined the effects of inclusion in social and academic realms for children both with and without disabilities.

Meyer et al. (1997) studied the effects of inclusion on the formation of friendships and the nature of social interactions. Research demonstrated that students with severe disabilities who were placed in general education classrooms had higher levels of social contact with typically developing peers and substantially larger friendship networks with did their typically developing peers (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995). A concern often raised when discussing inclusion and children with disabilities (especially those with challenging behaviors) is the impact they have on their typical peers. Hollowood et al. (1994) investigated the degree to which the presence of students with severe disabilities affected instruction time (both allocated and actual). They found no effect on learning outcomes for neurotypical students when peers with significant disabilities were included in their regular classrooms. Meyer et al. (1997) found that typical peers in fact gained much more when they were in classrooms with children with disabilities. Specifically, they had meaningful friendships and exhibited growth in social cognition and self-concept. Many qualitative studies, including ethnographic studies, documented growth in self-esteem and social skills (Rafferty et al., 2003).

The primary narrative around inclusion is about access to general education programs, curricula, and environments. E. T. Baker et al. (1995) conducted three meta-analyses and found a small to moderate positive effect for students in inclusive settings. Waldron and McLeskey (1998) studied the effects of inclusive school placement on children with mild and severe learning disabilities and found that students placed in inclusive settings made significantly more progress on a curriculum-based reading measure than did those in segregated settings. Specifically, 48% of the students in inclusive settings made progress in Reading that was comparable to typically developing peers, whereas only 38% made similar progress in traditional segregated settings. Cole et al. (2004) investigated the effects of inclusive placement for students with high-incidence disabilities (such as specific learning disabilities) and for their typical peers on indicators of student

achievement. They found that both students with disabilities and their typically developing peers had favorable outcomes. These studies showed a small but significant advantage for inclusive placements.

To many stakeholders in schools and districts, access to general education contexts and inclusion do not mean the same thing. Many times, children are identified as being "included" but do not receive meaningful opportunities to engage and participate in the general education core curriculum. Hence, Cosier et al. (2013) specifically examined the effects of hours spent in general education on achievement in Reading and Mathematics. Their study included a cross-section of 1,300 students with disabilities, who ranged in age from 6 to 9 years, nested within 180 school districts. The data on these participants were collected through the Pre-Elementary Longitudinal Study funded through the U.S. DOE. This large-scale study is unique in that it looks at access to general education for children with disabilities and its relation to achievement. Results showed that for each hour spent in general education, reading scores went up by 0.50 points, and Mathematics scores went up by 0.37 points. Although these coefficients seem small, the positive relationship should be considered within the context of a 35-hour school week. Considering these coefficient differences, if Student A spends 35 hours per week in a self-contained (special education) classroom but Student B spends 30 hours per week in a general education classroom, then Student B could potentially have a 12 to 15 point increase in Reading scores by virtue of more time accessing the curriculum in the general education classroom. Over time, these differences in scores could mean a substantial measured-skill difference in Reading and Mathematics.

Notably, positive outcomes were also seen in areas other than academics and social skills. The National Longitudinal Transition Study, Wave 2 (NLTS2) found that more time spent in general education settings led to fewer absences, fewer referrals for disruptive behavior, and better outcomes after high school (Wagner et al., 2006). Other studies described better IEP quality as measured by age appropriateness, functionality and generalizations, time of engagement, and individualized supports (Hunt & Farron Davis, 1992). A question that usually arises when considering students for inclusive settings is whether the students will receive the individualized supports they need. Students with severe disabilities are 13 times more likely to receive instruction directed towards them during whole-class teaching, and 23 times more likely to get one-on-one instruction, within the general education context (McDonnell et al., 2000, 2003).

This literature reviewed so far suggests that progress has been made with regard to availability of inclusive settings for children with disabilities. However, access is not distributed uniformly across the country or across subgroups (Artilles & Kozleski, 2007; Cole, 2006). Another salient argument that researchers advocated is that children in inclusive programs perform as well or slightly better than do children in specialized programs, and that inclusive programs can benefit children with and without disabilities, especially in social development (Cosier et al., 2013; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003). Although these social, academic, and other outcomes—such as those discovered in the NLTS2 transition study (NPDCI, 2011)—strengthen the arguments favoring inclusion, proponents of inclusive education also believe that this is a child's right (Booth, 1996; Rustemier, 2002).

Arguments Against Inclusion

Although inclusion is purported to be a means to remove barriers, allow greater participation in general education curriculum and settings, improve outcomes, and stop

discrimination, it is a hotly contested ideology whose manifestation in practice appears to be highly varied. Critics such as Lindsay and Dockrell (2002) argued that inclusion is not a "simple unambiguous concept" (p. 3), and that operationalizing inclusion is a necessary first step. They noted several studies evaluating inclusion and advocated that these cannot be considered "ringing endorsements" (e.g., E. T. Baker et al., 1995; Florian et al., 2002; Sebba & Sachdev, 1997). Lindsay and Dockrell (2002) pointed out that in the three meta-analyses that E. T. Baker et al. (1995) conducted, there was only a small positive effect size—mainly with academic achievement—and that effect was found in only one meta-analysis.

Fuchs and Fuchs (1995, 1998) responded to recommendations by the full-inclusion movement to dismantle special education services entirely (e.g., Stainback & Stainback, 1992) or for special educators to provide services to children with disabilities only in general education classrooms (Giangreco, 1993). Fuchs and Fuchs (1995, 1998) put forth that sometimes "separate" is necessary for students with disabilities to make the needed progress in their identified areas of need. They argued that the IDEA (2004) and the LRE concept already ensured that students are with typically developing peers to the "maximum extent appropriate" and are removed from the general education setting only when they are unable to make meaningful progress. Fuchs and Fuchs (1995, 1998) further stated that the law requires that children with disabilities receive an "appropriate education," and this need "overrides social interaction" concerns (p. 5). J. M. Baker and Zigmond's (1990) analysis supported Fuchs and Fuchs (1995), indicating that the general education classroom was not conducive to differentiation; instead; it focused more on conformity.

In another article published the same year, Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) argued that mainstream general education teachers are not capable of handling the wide range of needs that children with disabilities have. The authors maintained that they are not alone in this vein of thinking and that key organizations, such as the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities and the Division of Learning Disabilities in the Council for Exception Children (CEC), considered the stance of the full-inclusion movement to be a threat. Adaptations and accommodations were not readily accessible or available for students with special needs (McIntosh et al., 1993). According to Schumm and Vaughn (1991), even effective teachers felt that making adaptations in the general education classroom was not feasible. Those arguing against inclusion also cited studies supporting the view that children with disabilities preferred pull-out services (e.g., Guterman, 1995) despite feeling embarrassment and anger in special education settings (Albringer, 1995). These opponents believed special education settings were smaller, quieter, and more supportive environments where students could receive academic assistance (Padeliadu & Zigmond, 1996).

More recently, Gilmour (2018a) raised questions about the methodology used to study inclusive programs and cited many flaws in these studies. Further, she asked scholars to examine the experiences of the typically developing peers who are educated alongside disabled students in general education classrooms. Gilmour also argued that students with disabilities were identified for special education exactly because they were not making progress in general education classrooms. Placing them back in general education classrooms may suggest they are being exposed to the general curriculum, but achievement data indicated they are not making sufficient progress. According to Gilmour (2018b), research conducted at the national (e.g., Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study conducted between 2000 and 2006) and state levels (citing Massachusetts and Washington) has demonstrated better outcomes in terms of in-school academic performance and after-school outcomes (graduation rates, employability, etc.). However, Gilmour presented many limitations to those studies, primarily selection bias. She

purported that students who were included in general education settings and were part of the studies' data probably had better academic capabilities and fewer behavioral challenges. This, she said, accounted for the better outcomes in the studies. Gilmour argued that students with more needs at these school sites and districts were probably placed in segregated settings and not included in those datasets. From her article, it is evident that questions exist regarding whether these correlational national- and state-level studies captured the true picture or included selection bias.

Requisites for Successful Inclusive Programs

Having presented both sides of the argument around inclusion, I now put forth some key points that look more at "what is needed" for inclusion. From the research presented earlier, it is clear that children with a wide range of abilities who are placed in inclusive programs do as well as—and, in many cases better than—those who are in segregated settings. The research also demonstrated that access to general education curriculum, programs, and settings is a reality in the United States but is not available uniformly across all states (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010; U.S. DOE, 2015). Following are some key points about inclusion from the various studies that have been considered in this literature review. These points illustrate the wide variety of factors that are not only necessary influences for education in general, but also key to successful inclusion.

Collaboration Among Team Members

Many professionals are involved in implementing successful programs. Research has demonstrated that collaboration among team members, idea sharing, and time for planning are important aspects of successful execution. Hunt et al. (2004) investigated the effectiveness of the collaborative-teaming process and found that it had a positive impact on the learning and development of preschool students who were placed in general education settings. The teams met monthly, developed supports needed in the classroom and social contexts of school, and monitored implementation and data collection.

Specialized Interventions

Another key theme that emerged from the literature is that specialized intervention and instruction is a crucial factor in inclusive education (Odom, 2000). At certain times, naturalistic interventions may be used and may blend with the classroom routines and expectations. At other times, however, it may be necessary to use targeted interventions to address specific needs (Hunt et al., 2020; Stahmer & Ingersoll, 2004). Specialized instruction and intervention at the elementary and secondary levels may look different depending on the needs presented. Differentiated instruction, curricular supports, accommodations, adaptations, and modifications, along with assistive technology (AT), are touted as effective practices and methods to address the needs of the diverse student population. Peer-mediated interventions are also salient in general education contexts, and elementary and secondary teachers are encouraged to engage and model these practices (McMaster et al., 2006; Puranik et al., 2018; Pyle et al., 2017).

Teacher Beliefs

Imbued in the experiences of children with and without disabilities in inclusive environments are the beliefs that educators have about inclusion. Odom et al. (1999) found that

teachers' beliefs guide their practices and influence the cultures of inclusive preschools (Lieber et al., 1997; Odom & Diamond, 1998). The researchers also discovered that although teachers in inclusive settings held the belief that children with disabilities are full members of the classroom, there were differences in the way they enacted their beliefs: Some teachers minimized differences among the children, whereas others highlighted differences in all the children to promote individual respect (Odom et al., 1999).

Research on teacher beliefs in heterogeneous classrooms has evolved over the last 2 decades. Stanovich and Jordan (1998) developed an instrument to describe a set of teacher beliefs that lie along a continuum. They called this measure the pathognomic–interventionist interview. On the pathognomic end of the scale, beliefs are consequent from the notion of a specific disability. The pathognomic standpoint is conjectured to result in a set of practices that connote a "search for pathology." Patterns of pathognomic behaviors include a scarcity of interventions, little collaboration with resource teachers, dearth of an established link between evaluation and education, and negligible parental connection. At the other end of the continuum are a set of beliefs labeled "interventionist." Teachers holding these assumptions deem that pupils' learning problems are a consequence of interactions between the individual and the learning environment. These teachers try substantial interventions prior to crafting referrals; work with support personnel using a collaborative, team-based methodology; and connect assessment results with their instructional practices. Stanovich and Jordan reported the measure's inter-rater reliability as 0.88.

A. Jordan et al. (2009) posited that effective inclusionary practices—and therefore effective teaching—depend in part on beliefs teachers hold about the nature of disability, knowledge, learning, and their responsibility towards children with special needs. These beliefs share many elements of the larger construct of epistemological beliefs concerned with the nature of knowledge and knowing.

Resources and Policy

Another important factor that affects inclusion is policy and sociopolitical factors surrounding its implementation because these affect support and acceptance (Lieber et al., 2000; Mulvihill et al., 2002). The problems first reported in the literature as barriers, such as preparation for inclusion, adequacy of resources, and differences in views among stakeholders (Peck et al., 1989), still surface as themes. Buysse et al. (1998) used exploratory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of perceived barriers and supports to inclusion in early childhood settings. Personnel training and general education teacher preparation prominently emerged as important barriers, with lack of planning time a close contender. In a more recent qualitative study, Purcell et al. (2007) analyzed challenges and facilitators to inclusive education. They posited that collaborative relationships among team members, personnel training, extended supports, and a shared vision were crucial to the participants they had interviewed. In Villa and Thousand's (2005) qualitative study at the secondary level, themes that surfaced included administrator support, ongoing professional development, collaboration and communication, and expanded authentic assessment approaches. Some of these themes were similar to what appeared in the preschool literature on inclusion, suggesting common underlying themes or practices that are possibly universal across settings and age ranges of the children served.

Theoretical Foundations: Learner Variability

In this section, I uncover a theoretical principle that will undergird the conceptual framework I propose in this chapter. This theoretical principle—the crux of my conceptual framework—is that of learner variability, which means there is no average learner. Each learner is unique, as are human fingerprints, and every learner's needs are diverse and varied (T. Rose, 2016). To provide an understanding of how educating children became based on averages, I explore the roots of scientific management and factory organization that became popular in the 1880s and how that came to influence education (Brown et al., 1999). The challenge of providing education to the masses was compared with the running of factories, and many school administrators were keen to bring scientific organization into the running of schools. Education was viewed within the context of an assembly line, wherein students were the raw materials shaped and fashioned by teachers to become the end product at the behest of the administrators, who were viewed as the efficiency experts.

The notion of efficiency governing how schools are run can be credited to Edward Thorndike, who is considered a pioneer in the history of education (Brown et al., 1999). He believed the main goal of education was to sort people by ability so they could be assigned proper jobs suited to their ability levels. In Thorndike's view, this was proper utilization of educational resources. The emulation of factory productivity fostered the development of standardized tests to measure the end product. These tests also would measure the teacher's productivity and serve as an efficient way to manage teachers from the central school office. In short, the factory model affected the design of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in schools. Although these views were first espoused in the late 19th century, they still govern how we run schools today: Students are still sorted based on how they perform on standardized tests with curriculum designed for the "average" student.

Who is an "average" person? The "average man" is a very prominent figure. As a rule, "he is used as an oversimplified means of describing the combined characteristics of a varied population" (Daniels, 1952, p. 5). To elaborate on the idea of the average person, I draw upon the work of Todd Rose (2016) at the Harvard Mind, Brain, and Education Institute and the Center for Applied Special Technology (now called CAST). Rose linked the origins of this idea of "averages" to a study conducted by the U.S. Air Force (USAF) in 1952 after they suffered massive failures for which they could find no plausible cause. Eventually, they discovered the problem to be in their fighter jets cockpits and realized that the cockpits were designed for the average pilot of the 1920s. Hypothesizing that the dimensions of the pilots had transformed over the years, they undertook a large-scale study to understand the average dimensions of contemporary (1950s) pilots. Their hypothesis was that once they had the new dimensions and built cockpits to those new sizes, they would achieve better results: What use is the latest technology if the pilot could not reach it when making a split-second life-or-death decision?

The USAF measured 4,000 pilots for 10 size dimensions. To their amazement, they discovered that no pilot was average on all 10 dimensions. This pushed the USAF to take a very bold step and require airplane manufacturing companies to design cockpits at the edges of the dimensions. That is, manufacturers would design cockpits to accommodate, for example, both the tallest and shortest individual the technology would allow. Although this seems intuitive nowadays, there was an incredible amount of pushback when the USAF made these demands in the 1950s. Manufacturers posited that it would be near impossible and incredibly expensive to

build cockpits that would accommodate such a wide range of dimensions. However, the USAF did not relent; they forced the fighter-jet manufacturers to comply. The technology and innovation they put into motion to deliver what the USAF demanded then is responsible for many things taken for granted these days, such as adjustable seats in automobiles. Just as no pilot was average on all 10 size dimensions, students are not average on all metrics used to measure their learning and development.

To further establish the notion of the variability that exists in the human species, I present another example from the book, *The End of Average* (T. Rose, 2016). Many businesses, including Google, Microsoft, and Deloitte, have used a method that General Electric pioneered in the 1980s called *forced ranking* or *stack ranking*. In this method, employees are ranked using a single-score system that uses a handful of metrics or a single metric to rank performance. Employees were ranked as above average, average, or below average. Those falling below average were let go or placed on improvement plans. Although ranking in this manner was intuitive and appeared to be backed by accuracy and objectivity, by 2015 Microsoft, Google, and Deloitte abandoned the method. Microsoft called this period their "lost decade" because its employees were pushed to compete with each other, lost opportunities to collaborate, and were dissuaded from working with top performers because doing so would lower their own rankings. Problematically, this sort of ranking assumes that talent is one dimensional.

These companies abandoned the practice due to a growing sense that they were overlooking talent—that the rankings did not reveal the true performance of the employees as much as they revealed the idiosyncrasies of the person ranking them. I presented this example to draw attention to how such practices at these corporations were similar to how students in K–12 settings are assessed using a single metric, such as a test, or by giving students only one way to demonstrate their learning and understanding. This reveals yet again how assessment practices cater to the mythical "average" learner.

If the average learner is a myth, then how do we understand our students and cater to their unique learning profiles? To further expand and understand learner variability and the science of individuality, T. Rose (2016) proposed three principles: (a) the jaggedness principle, (b) the context principle, and (c) the pathways principle. I outline these in the following section and present them as the underlying theoretical principles that support the conceptual framework I propose.

Jaggedness Principle

The jaggedness principle purports that if something is jagged, then it is multidimensional, and these dimensions are relatively independent—in other words, weakly correlated—of each other. Students are multidimensional and vary on dimensions such as memory, language spoken, attention, reading ability, and interests. Hence, T. Rose (2016) claimed, if we design learning environments and materials for an average learner without considering these variances, then we have designed it for nobody.

Context Principle

T. Rose (2016) then questioned long-held assumptions about intelligence initially put forth by Sir Francis Galton, a Victorian era statistician, psychometrician, and inventor. Galton said that intelligence is quantifiable and normally distributed. He proposed that intelligence and other

physical and mental characteristics are inherited and biologically based. Rose argued that Galton's theories of intelligence have long influenced how schools and workplaces are run, even to this day. Rose's context principle holds that there are no traits. Instead, individuals should always be viewed in context using the "if–then" principle.

Pathways Principle

The pathways principle incorporates the idea that there is no one normal way of achieving any goal; there are many equally valid ways to reach a goal. This means that the optimal path for any individual is determined by their individuality.

In summary, T. Rose (2016) theorized that humans are complex and multidimensional in their mental and physical characteristics, traits must be situated contextually, and there are varied paths to development; thus, no one path can be privileged over another. These principles have potential implications for designing learning environments, and I use them in designing the conceptual framework (proposed next) for inclusive practices.

Conceptual Framework: Inclusive by Design

So far in this chapter, I examined the arguments for and against inclusion. Then I outlined key points that speak to "what is needed" for inclusion. I presented the myth of the "average" learner and a theoretical foundation on learner variability that includes the three principles that undergird this conceptual framework. The desired results, as the UNCRPD (UN DESA, 2008) articulated, are membership, belonging, full realization of human potential, and positive social relationships. This framework and its theoretical underpinnings seek to fulfill those obligations.

This framework is based on the joint position statement adopted by the CEC and the National Association for Educating Young Children (NAEYC). The statement, released in 2009, outlined evidence-based and promising practices that support quality inclusion (NPDCI, 2011). According to the joint statement, there are three essential elements when considering inclusion: the first element looks at providing *access*, the second examines how students will *participate*, and the third entails *supports* for stakeholders in the process.

I entitle this framework, "Inclusive by Design," because it strives to move away from the idea of disability as an afterthought. Historically, the framing of a law drove disability access to be viewed through the lens of compliance. Hence, disability is perceived as an individual problem: Once the disabled student is no longer in the classroom, there is no need to implement those accommodations, adaptations, or modifications. This is problematic because it could lead to resentment towards the disabled student and imply that something extra needs to be done for that individual. Instead, if the planning were proactive and inclusive by design, then it would redefine "how we are doing being inclusive." Doing so defies normative ways of being accessible (which can be exclusionary) and redefines what it means to be present and participate in a classroom community. That is the *spirit* of the law that governs these provisions, as opposed to the *letter* of the law that drives the compliance mindset.

Whereas the CEC–NAEYC joint position statement encompassed mainly the early years, in this chapter, I outline how to use the same tenets (access, participation, and supports) to develop inclusive programming for elementary and secondary schools. Additionally, I propose which practices could support the realization of each tenet.

The First Tenet: Access:

Access strongly correlates with power. It implies that in certain situations, some people do not have access to certain roles or discourses, and others control who gets that access. In the case of education for children with disabilities, the passage of Public Law (PL) 94-142 in 1975 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975) was the first time that public schools were mandated to provide schooling for disabled children. Prior to its passage, schools could exclude children based on disability. Van Dijk (1996) pointed out that in some situations, certain roles afforded more access than others. In educational settings, for instance, teachers and school administrators had the power to provide or restrict access to inclusive settings more than did the parents of disabled children. Van der Klift and Kunc (2017), disability justice advocates, wrote of being denied even physical access to a general education setting and having to persuade school administrators to allow that "privilege." Access, or lack thereof, speaks to existing power relations. The apparent lack of access prompted international organizations such as the UN to take stances that promote access and penalize exclusionary practices.

Although different meanings for inclusive education are seen across the world, in the United States it is rooted largely in access to general education classrooms for students with disabilities. Researchers and practitioners have advocated to make access to the general education curriculum more seamless for all students. As added accountability measures held schools responsible for all students and changed the way students were expected to learn, engage with the content, ask questions, and present their understandings came about, U.S. public schools included more diverse student populations. From this context, the UDL framework emerged.

The UDL framework has its roots in the UD architectural movement (D. H. Rose & Meyer, 2002). This movement sought to encourage designers to conceptualize and construct structures that cater to the needs of a wide spectrum of individuals. The idea was that individuals, including those with disabilities, should be able to use the facilities without further adaptations (Center for Universal Design, 2015). Consider the addition of ramps to buildings: Architects quickly discovered that in addition to providing access to its intended population—namely wheelchair users—ramps increased access for people pushing strollers or riding skateboards, young families with toddlers who may still be still unsure on their feet, and people with visual impairments who may not perceive steps clearly. By providing a feature intended to allow wheelchair users to enter a building, access was made easier for a wider variety of individuals. Building this adaptation for a divergent population increased the building's usability for many more.

How can UD be extended to learning and classrooms? Three frameworks to assist in developing learning environments have been proposed: UD for instruction, universal instructional design, and UDL (Rao et al., 2014). The CAST (2018b) has been instrumental in disseminating information and research about UDL and, in 2011, revised the framework to release the UDL 2.0 guidelines. This paper examines UDL in greater detail because UDL is included in the U.S. DOE's toolkit for stakeholders (Office of Special Education Programs, 2018).

UD and UDL. When IDEA (2004) was reauthorized, the term *universal design* was incorporated into Federal law under special education. Prior to that, UD was a part of the Assistive Technology Act (1998), where it meant a concept or philosophy to design products or services to serve the widest possible range of users. *Universal design for learning* is defined as a scientific framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the ways teachers present the instruction and students engage in the learning and demonstrate their understanding. It is aimed

at reducing barriers to learning and to providing accommodations, adaptations, and modifications. It also maintains high expectations for all learners, regardless of whether they have an identified disability, are considered limited English proficient (formerly, English-language learners), or are from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds (Edyburn, 2010; Israel et al., 2014). In summary, UD supports the design of products, buildings, outdoor spaces, and communications that meet the needs of persons with disabilities at the design phase. By contrast, UDL focuses on addressing the dynamic processes of teaching and learning (Hall et al., 2012). The UDL framework emerged as U.S. public schools included a more diverse student population, as accountability measures that hold schools responsible for all students were added, and as changes in the way students were expected to learn, engage with the content, ask questions, and present their understandings came about.

UDL Framework. Advances in neurosciences and learning sciences have established that learning styles are as unique as fingerprints, and notions of differences such as "typically developing" and "special needs" learners are gross oversimplifications (CAST, 2018b). Tremendous variation exists in how individuals interact with and perceive the environment. If there were to be a constant, than it would be that there is variability among learners—and that this sits at the dynamic and complex intersection of the individual and the environment. The idea of the average learner for whom curricula are typically designed is more mythical than real. In essence, the two main findings that form the basis for UDL are that learning in the individual brain and learning among individuals are highly varied and distributed. The UDL framework can be divided into two layers: the conceptual layer with the three brain networks and the implementation layer that comprises its three principles (Al-Azawei et al., 2016).

UDL Brain Networks. Researchers at CAST (Hall et al., 2012) advanced a basic model that partitions the learning brain and seeks to understand how the brain functions during learning. This model purports that three networks in the brain are activated during the learning process (CAST, 2018a**)**. The *recognition networks* are specialized to sense and assign meaning and enable the learner to identify and understand information, ideas, and concepts—referred to as the "what" of learning. The *strategic networks* relate primarily to the executive functions. They oversee mental and motor patterns and assist in planning and executing actions—the "how "of learning. Last, the *affective networks* assign evaluative feedback and emotional significance—the "why" of learning. Understanding this model and the interrelationships among the three networks can help practitioners appreciate learners' differences and variability and the need to build flexibility when addressing the presentation of information, engagement of learners, and learners' subsequent expression of knowledge.

UDL Principles. The three principles map on the neural networks and are meant to be nonprescriptive guidelines to assist in developing and implementing effective inclusive practices (Schelly et al., 2011). They are not meant to be used as a checklist. Instead, they should be seen more as a lens with which to view the important process of customizing learning and instruction (D. H. Rose & Gravel, 2009). These principles contain potential solutions to barriers (undesirable difficulties) students encounter during the course of learning. However, the process is still meant to have desirable difficulties that make learning challenging but effective (Soderstorm & Bjork, 2015). The first principle is to offer multiple means of *engagement* (maps to the affective network). The second principle is to provide multiple means of *representation* and corresponds to the recognition network. The last is multiple means of *action and expression*, which correspond to the strategic network.

The UDL principle to provide multiple means of engagement encourages curriculum designers, teachers, and practitioners to allow different ways to recruit interest, sustain effort, and provide options for students to self-regulate while learning. The second principle reasons that no single means of representation will be ideal for all learners. Because learners differ in the ways they process information, several ways to perceive information and understand language and symbols should be made available. The third principle (multiple means of action and expression) provides checkpoints that help curriculum designers and teachers vary the methods by which students respond, increase the use of ATs, and build automaticity with graduated levels of support for practice and performance (CAST, 2018b). Each principle is divided into three guidelines (nine guidelines in total) and further into 31 checkpoints to be followed to foster the framework.

Research Evidence on UDL. Numerous articles published in peer-reviewed journals spoke to the positive effects of UDL approaches for varied student populations (Browder et al., 2009; CAST, 2018b). Several outlined examples of how approaches based on UDL guidelines level the playing field for students with learning disabilities (Cook & Rao, 2018; King-Sears, 2014; Stroebel et al., 2007). Additionally, emerging empirical evidence documented the success of designing technology tools using these principles to assist struggling readers in skills such as reading comprehension (Hall et al., 2015). Increased student engagement while using UDL was reported, as well (Abell et al., 2011). The National Center on Universal Design for Learning (n.d.) website provided extensive evidence that includes quantitative and qualitative studies (many by practitioners) that speak to the efficacy of each of the guidelines' 31 discrete checkpoints.

However, the evidence supporting implementation of UDL as a framework is still in its infancy (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Edyburn, 2010, 2013; King-Sears, 2014; Rao et al., 2014). Rao et al. (2014) undertook a meta-analysis of empirical articles referencing UD in education. Their review encompassed three UD-based frameworks—UDL, UD for instruction, and universal instructional design—with all reviewed papers produced between 2005 and 2011. The 13 studies reviewed used quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods designs and applied UD principles for assorted purposes. The studies examined academic outcomes, technology-based academic environments, testing accommodations, classroom practices, and staff training. Rao et al. reported that the extent to which the researchers connected the UD principles to their interventions, measures, and outcomes varied. The inconsistencies posed challenges to interpreting the extent of the effectiveness of UD principles in educational practices. Rao et al. recommended that separate systematic analyses of each type of UD framework (i.e., UDL, UD for instruction, or universal instructional design) be undertaken instead.

To specifically analyze the effects of UDL, Al-Azawei et al. (2016) carried out a systematic content analysis of 12 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2012 and 2015 that reported adopting UDL. They analyzed these studies according to seven themes: types of results, beneficiaries of the study (learner, teacher, or both), sample features; geographic location, data collection, analytic techniques, and learning modes (online, blended, or both). The authors further classified the objectives of the literature reviewed into four categories: measuring student perceptions, evaluating performance, developing lesson plans, and exploring curricula alignment with UDL principles.

One gap evident in the reviewed research was the extent to which the UDL principles and guidelines were used. How compliant are design aspects of the learning environments and curricula with UDL? This was not clearly outlined in the studies reviewed (Al-Azawei et al., 2016;

Rao et al., 2014), and thus poses a serious concern for reliability. It leads to questioning whether we would recognize UDL "if we saw it" (Edyburn, 2010).

Edyburn (2010) proposed that just utilizing technology tools or integrating them into the curriculum does not constitute implementing UDL. He argued that there is a lack of an operational definition as to what UDL looks like in action. This leads to curriculum designers, teachers, administrators, and product developers espousing the use of UDL but lacking clear evidence of its usage. Edyburn outlined that although it is important to acknowledge the origins of UDL to UD in architecture, it is equally important to understand its differences in the built environment. To take UDL implementation to the next level, attention must be paid to the dynamic aspects of teaching and learning—such as interactions among learning objectives, learner characteristics, strategies used, and outcomes thereof. It requires instructional designers to value academic diversity and build access and engagement while accounting for individual differences.

Edyburn (2010) spotlighted the importance of diversity blueprints in understanding the impact of various instructional methods and designs on learners. Citing the work of Molenbroek and de Bruin (2006), Edyburn (2010) revealed that designers' notions of accessibility and diversity directly correlate to the products they design. For example, a lesson designed to have students build physical models to demonstrate their understanding of cell theory would be inaccessible to a student with an orthopedic impairment who has no functional use of his hands. Although this lesson may seem designed to be hands-on and possibly incorporate UDL principles, the designer's lack of a diversity blueprint about individuals who are orthopedically impaired—one of the 13 disability categories recognized in the IDEA (2004)—renders the lesson inaccessible for those users. This example highlights that UDL is essentially about intentionally designing to meet the learners' needs and using technology as a delivery mode, where necessary. Although UDL is not just AT, computers and technology are crucial in helping students achieve high standards in 21st-century classrooms.

Edyburn's (2010) commentary, Al-Azawei et al.'s (2016) content analysis, and Rao et al.'s (2014) literature review all point to gaps in implementing UDL that mainly have to do with the dynamic nature of teaching and learning. Given the interaction between lesson objectives and learner characteristics, it is imperative to design with what Edyburn (2010) proposed—a diversity blueprint. This calls for a deep understanding of who the learners are. Additionally, it calls for an iterative process that incorporates formative and summative assessment during instruction.

Specialized Intervention Versus UDL. Having examined the UDL framework in depth, along with Edyburn's (2010) critical commentary, I now delve into some studies that examined learner outcomes (specifically for those with learning disabilities) when the UDL framework was integrated for instruction. These studies used randomized controlled trial (RCT) methodology. Fuchs et al. (2015) synthesized the results of three RCTs that studied achievement gaps on (Mathematics) fractions for very low-performing students as a function of whether they received inclusive fraction instruction (classrooms using UDL approaches) or intensive intervention. In three RCTs conducted over 3 years, 203 students who scored at or below the 10th percentile in Mathematics at the beginning of fourth grade were randomly assigned at the individual level to either 12 weeks of inclusive fraction instruction or specialized intervention. Inclusive instruction in these studies incorporated using UDL principles to engage all learners, accommodations (e.g., additional time on tests), multiple presentation modes, related technological assists (e.g., amplification and magnification devices), alternate test-taking settings (e.g., quiet room or study carrel), and alternate response methods (e.g., marking answers in book or using a scribe). The

educators, trained in UDL, also used co-teaching practices in which a special educator and general education teacher partnered to implement the inclusive general education curriculum. The intensive intervention treatment comprised carefully designed complex instructional routines rooted in explicit instruction and an excellent understanding of the domain (in this case, Mathematics). Additionally, progress monitoring to tailor the instructional program components was used in conjunction with the explicit instruction.

The results of the posttests conducted at the end of each of the three RCTs concluded that students in the specialized intervention-treatment group outperformed those in the inclusive fraction intervention. Specifically, in the comparing-fractions posttest, the effect sizes were particularly robust (ranging from 0.87 to 1.67) because this was the focus of the explicit instruction in the specialized intervention groups. Fuchs et al. (2015) argued that this was important in that it predicts fraction learning between Grades 3 and Grade 5 (Hansen et al., 2015 N. C. Jordan et al., 2009) and indicates Mathematics (including Algebra) achievement in later years (Siegler et al., 2012). Fuchs et al. (2015) concluded that to prevent the achievement gap from widening, specialized intensive intervention would be required for students who are not performing at grade level. They also argued that *location* and *exposure* are not synonymous with *access* to general education curriculum. Access should be examined alongside student outcomes and not tied to the setting where the instruction is provided (i.e., the inclusive general education setting).

Is Access Enough? Fuchs et al.'s (2015) research brought to light the importance of evaluating whether providing access to the general education curriculum in inclusive settings using UDL alone would improve outcomes. Although they presented compelling evidence, I argue that the availability of intensive intervention should not be a function of setting. I propose that UDL should be a means of access to the general education curriculum, and that access is only one aspect of an inclusive school culture. These studies strengthen my argument that a framework for building inclusive schools cannot be based simply on ensuring access. Meaningful participation, as discussed in the next section, is equally important.

The Second Tenet: Participation

The second tenet calls for meaningful participation. Article 24 of the UNCRPD (UN DESA, 2008) stresses that whereas access is key, means for participation also warrants consideration. The word *access* means admittance or entrance. But how can mere admittance suffice for an educational experience? Drawing on an unlikely source—namely, grammar theory—I analyze what *participation* means in relation to the framework. The word "participant is a component of a clause and the components include participants, the process and the circumstances" (P. Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 87). Applying this definition to my discussion, the *participants* are the children with disabilities, the *process* (participation) involves the various ways in which (given access) the students are involved and contribute alongside their peers, and the *circumstances* would involve access to the general education setting and curriculum. Hence, if we did not have specific ideas and strategies outlined for participation, the students would have only two of the three components (i.e., being a participant and having access).

Participation refers to the strategies, methods, and other supports used to facilitate meaningful participation in the general education classroom. To understand what participation in general education involves, I first examine the contradiction of differentiation and integration that characterizes special education. In educational settings, while seeking to find answers for

particular problems, the problems are viewed as their isolated parts at the expense of the whole (Sailor & Roger, 2005). This leads to segregating the children in an effort to better meet their educational needs. The goal of special education was to provide accommodations, adaptations, and specialized instruction to aid participation in the LRE but, in practice, evolved into parallel settings with varying levels of connections.

I now examine frameworks that contribute to meaningful participation of all children in their classrooms and related contexts where learning and socialization take place. Tiered intensive interventions that are data driven using formative and summative assessments and frequent progress monitoring are essential components of participation frameworks such as the multitiered system of support (MTSS). These have extensive research backing their efficacy (Sailor, 2015, 2017). The MTSS framework aims at academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the student population. It encompasses positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behavioral and social emotional needs as a schoolwide process. This allows for behavior issues to be addressed within a school framework with wider training available to all staff (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

The Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation, a federally funded technical assistance program pioneered by the University of Kansas, is an example of an MTSS intended to produce system change and to support school districts and LREs. This MTSS involves two essential components: inclusive academic instruction and inclusive behavior instruction. Both have five foundational practices that are mirrored across the two components. The first foundational practice involves identifying and selecting a comprehensive assessment system that drives the data collection process. This allows all students to be assessed and progress-monitoring data to be collected at regularly scheduled intervals. The second practice is building teams to engage in the data-based planning and implementation process. Practices 3 and 4 center around classroom instruction, supplemental supports, and intervention. Practice 3 calls for all students to receive universally designed instruction (Tier 1, or the base of the MTSS pyramid). The fourth practice ensures that the results of data monitoring lead to developing targeted interventions and supports (Tier 2 of the pyramid), and the fifth practice provides individualized interventions and supports (Tier 3) for those who need it. These foundational practices, coupled with evidence-based instructional strategies such as systematic and explicit instruction, provide a robust educational experience that considers the unique learning needs of a diverse population.

If inclusion thus far has failed to garner the needed attention from general education, could the failure be attributed to the way it was presented? Currently, a student in a general education classroom who does not meet required benchmarks for progress is referred to special education. This translates to the hope that a different placement setting will solve the learning or behavioral problems the student is experiencing—and makes the *general education classroom* the unit of analysis (Sailor & Roger, 2005). If instead it were decided that *schools* would be the focus, and if a student were unable to perform at the expected levels for certain aspects of the curriculum in a given grade level, could the school not provide the appropriate supports, adaptations, and accommodations? Adopting such an approach allows for optimal utilization of resources within the school. It also opens up specialized targeted instruction not just for the student with special needs, but also for other members of the general education classrooms who may benefit from additional support.

Facilitating full participation involves using a variety of instructional and intervention approaches to promote academic and social engagement in the natural sociocultural context.

Embedded instruction and intervention strategies address specific goals within the context of the everyday routines, activities, and transitions. Scaffolding strategies, which are structured, targeted approaches, can be used with children who require more intensive supports (e.g., modeling, response prompting, peer-assisted learning strategies, sentence-level gist, and corrective feedback) across a wide variety of contexts. All students should be allowed to contribute to the maximum extent appropriate in their natural sociocultural contexts. Legislative and school reform efforts posit that for students to be career and college ready, a data-based, outcome-driven model should be used to steer instructional and intervention practices (U.S. DOE, 2010). For such strategies and interventions to be effective, they must be monitored closely with an overarching system that matches the intensity levels the students need. In Fuchs et al.'s (2015) research, this was the component that was provided consistently to the group of students who were not in inclusive general education classrooms. These data-driven, tiered, and intensive interventions, which use formative and summative assessments and frequent progress monitoring, are essential components of MTSS participation frameworks and have extensive research backing their efficacy (Sailor, 2015, 2017; for a full description of MTSS, see Sailor & Roger, 2005; Swift Education Center, 2021). A recent study using multilevel multinomial modeling suggested that schools became more inclusive with more students receiving services in LREs and others no longer requiring special education services (Kurth et al., 2018).

In summary, the MTSS framework rests on the fact that research-based core curricula and behavioral supports are delivered to students by well-trained and supported teachers (NPDCI, 2011; Sailor et al., 2018). Its next important aspect is the collection of data (universal screeners) and consistent monitoring of student progress (formative and summative assessments), which drive the framework's "responsiveness" aspect (Hall et al., 2012). Based on the data, students are provided with intensive or strategic interventions and opportunities to delve further and expand the depth and complexity of the material being learned (Sailor et al., 2018). This approach allows teachers to connect results of formative assessments and progress monitoring with individualized and standardized approaches to instruction and interventions. Sailor et al. (2018) studied the impact of MTSS and found preliminary evidence of this model's effectiveness on students' academic and behavioral outcomes and inclusion rates at the school sites that embraced this approach.

In the elementary years, the core curriculum typically addresses 75% to 80% of the student population. However, additional tiered layers of instruction or intervention are required for a certain percentage of the population, and the data drive the intensity of the intervention required (Cusumano et al., 2014; Marston, 2005). Instruction and intervention provided in this manner move away from the belief that students who do not present typical learning or behavior are out of reach of general education (Cusumano et al., 2014). This phase, often referred to as the prereferral stage, could be used to address the learning or behavioral challenges presented. However, research revealed that the mindset during this phase typically supports that placement in a specialized setting would answer the child's challenges (Hanley, 2010), and that intervention implementers in the prereferral stages were not adequately trained, bringing to question the fidelity with which implementation occurred (Flugum & Reschly, 1994).

The Third Tenet: Supports

The previous two sections of the conceptual framework discussed how access to the general education curriculum can be facilitated and how students can meaningfully participate in the instruction and receive the interventions they need. I now delve into the third pillar or tenet of the framework: supports. Supports provide a solid infrastructure that offers learning opportunities for educators and therapists to develop and apply the professional understandings, skills, and mindsets necessary to bring quality inclusive practices to fruition.

This third tenet emphasizes the importance of providing supports to the family, students, and professionals working in inclusive settings. The LEAs typically use professional development models to support their staff. I give great attention in this subsection to communities of practice as a particularly useful construct when engaging in inclusive education, notably with the works of Mortier (2018). Additionally, I devote some consideration to professional learning communities (PLCs), in which educators meet regularly and collaborate to improve their teaching practices while sharing data and formative assessments. The PLCs typically do not include other stakeholders, such as paraeducators or parents; instead, they typically comprise certificated personnel such as teachers, speech pathologists, and psychologists.

Communities of Practice. Whereas PLCs are groups of educators, communities of practice can comprise a diverse group of stakeholders. Especially for the educational benefit of students with disabilities, the input that parents or guardians and various participants of the student's IEP team offer could be invaluable for the development of the educational plan. Mortier et al.'s (2010) research demonstrated that building these communities of practice can help improve the daily practice of including children with disabilities among their typically developing peers. Her research showed that these theoretical concepts of learning communities can translate into practice. They rely on day-to-day knowledge, engage in collective inquiry, and share understanding via interacting with the children in their natural sociocultural contexts.

Special education is rooted in the medical model (Danforth, 2017), which calls for specialized interventions, treatment, therapies, and trainings and advocates for a highly specialized body of knowledge that general education teachers feel they do not possess. Hence, there appears to be an overwhelming need to diagnose and segregate students with disabilities to receive specialized interventions from "experts" who possess that knowledge. This, inadvertently, places parents and students at the margins of those expert systems. Within this binary epistemological framework of experts and nonexperts, it is highly likely that general education teachers feel that including disabled children could be time consuming and require additional work outside the realm of their able-bodied students and of the knowledge general education teachers may not possess.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this by interacting on an ongoing basis (Lave & Wenger; 2005). These communities share a mission, vision, and goals; engage in collective inquiry; and respond to change as needed (Toole & Louis, 2002). They have three essential elements: a joint enterprise (domain), mutual engagement (community), and shared repertoire (practice; Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991)**.** The *joint enterprise* or goal drives the communities together. *Mutual engagement* refers to the community's social fabric that provides a space to share knowledge and ideas, articulate problems they may be encountering, expose their inadequacies, ask questions, and listen to one another. *Shared repertoire* refers to the specialized knowledge the community develops and maintains. This framework juxtaposes community,

practice, identity, and meaning as integral to the learning process. It links learning, mediation of meaning-making, and transformation of identity in the process and thus implies that learning is an active process in which learners interact and participate in shared practice. Rooted in social constructivist theories, Wenger's (1998) original work on communities of practice deemed that learning is a process of social transformation. It questioned theories that posited that knowledge can be delivered from expert to novice through a process of delineation and individual growth.

Mortier (2018) conceived of communities of practice as an alternative theoretical framework of knowledge. The communities could be utilized to address some persistent barriers resulting from the ideologies and beliefs entrenched in the special education epistemology to inclusive education. Mortier delineated four reasons schools intending to become inclusive of all students should consider communities of practice (each summarized in the next section).

Alternative to Top–Down Innovation. Mortier (2018) argued that communities of practice provide an alternative to the traditional top–down innovation prevalent in education. In educational contexts, educators are typically *informed* of new concepts or ideas to be implemented and may have many insecurities, questions, and opposition to such innovations. Adopting a dynamic process that focuses on possibilities and practical solutions allows people to construct their own meaning around the change and to voice their own ideas about the pace—and thereby set the parameters for implementation. In the case of inclusive education, the narrative could shift from larger philosophical questions, such as, "Does inclusive education work?" to "How do we include this student in this classroom?" Such communities also provide a venue wherein members can express their doubts and concerns and rely on the group's shared collective knowledge to brainstorm solutions.

Working with Uncertainty and Trust. When including children with disabilities, a certain level of uncertainty tends to arise about not only the students' needs, but also the activities in which the class may engage, strategies used, group dynamics, and cultural context of the classroom. This uncertainty calls for an assumption of not knowing and, in so assuming, creates space for experimentation. However, professional identity is built around the knowledge that "as teachers we have answers," and such an assumption also calls for us to express our inadequacies. Communities of practice, Mortier (2018) argued, can be that "in between space" where teachers can express their concerns and their subjectivity while developing local knowledge that answers questions about how to include students in their day-to-day practice.

Espoused Theory and Theory in Use. General education teachers typically articulate that they do not possess the specialized knowledge to teach students with disabilities (*espoused knowledge*). However, research documenting their values, beliefs, and reflections about inclusion demonstrated that they possess the requisite knowledge, proclivities, and abilities to include students in their classrooms (*knowledge in use*). Espoused theories are generally known to the teacher, whereas theories in use are less apparent. This knowledge is tacit and implicit in the teachers' patterns of action and sometimes cannot be extracted out of context. Although this may be difficult to abstract out of a setting, it could be articulated within a community of practice. Parents and educators bring personal stories or situation-specific knowledge that, when shared, allows creation of a nuanced understanding of how the student functions and how to best meet those needs.

Diluting the Effects of Power Relations. Schools are generally conceived to be staffed by professionals with a specialized body of knowledge, and parents as receivers of that knowledge in regard to their child's participation and achievement within that context. This thus brings forth a

power inequality. Further, educators and parents may have differing value systems and ideals, which could lead to tense communications. Working through a community of practice model that involves parents as well as educators could be a constructive negotiation of what matters to the parents and how that can be achieved within the school context, focused on building supports necessary to successfully include children with disabilities.

Professional Learning Communities. Another model of collaboration that has gained popularity in schools and districts throughout the United States are PLCs, groups of teachers in a grade level, school, or district with common interests in student learning. At the heart of this concept is not just individual teacher learning, but learning as a community (Westheimer, 1999). The PLCs focus on student learning, which is influenced by teaching quality, which, in turn, is improved by continual professional learning. Thus, PLCs provide a context that is most supportive of professional learning (Hirsh & Hord, 2008). Lambert et al. (2005) stressed that teaching staff need to understand the linkage between students' learning in the classroom and teachers' learning with colleagues. Members of a PLC will study student data and use them to drive instruction and interventions. The PLCs also provide a forum through which teachers and other staff take collective responsibility for student learning, prioritize their needs, and engage in activities that will support them to learn new strategies and methods that promote student engagement and learning (Hart, 2009).

Conclusion

More than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain in 1994 to further UNESCO's "education for all" objective. They considered the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children. The Salamanca Statement reaffirmed every individual's right to education, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and renewed the world community's pledge at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All to ensure that right regardless of individual differences. More recently, the UNCRPD (UN DESA, 2008, Article 24) recognized the right to education for persons with disabilities. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and based on equal opportunity, member states agreed to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, as well as lifelong learning directed to fully developing human potential, dignity, and self-worth. They also agreed to provide reasonable accommodation within general education systems to make inclusive education accessible, meaningful, and participatory.

Inclusive systems provide better quality education for all children and are instrumental in shifting discriminatory attitudes. Children's first relationships with the world outside of their immediate family begin in school contexts. They form the basis for later relationships and social interactions. Where children of diverse backgrounds and abilities play, socialize, and learn together becomes fertile ground for respect and understanding to grow and blossom. Likewise, discriminatory attitudes are perpetuated when educational settings exclude and segregate. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life.

Although national laws (e.g., IDEA, 2004) and international agreements tout the importance of inclusive education, inclusion remains a hotly debated topic. Proponents on both sides of the debate purport that either inclusion or special education in separate settings is much

more beneficial. In this chapter, I thoroughly analyzed both sides of the argument. A plethora of research evidence demonstrated the efficacy of inclusive education on academic achievement (Carlson et al., 2008; Hehir et al., 2016; Hunt et al., 2020) and social and emotional development (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Hehir et al., 2016; Schifter & Hehir, 2018). However, proponents of separate settings, such as Gilmour (2018a, 2018b) questioned the participant-selection procedures in those studies and speculated that the studies' selection bias caused students with fewer academic and behavioral challenges to more probably be included, thereby increasing their chances of success. In another series of studies, Fuchs et al. (2015) demonstrated that students who received special education services in separate settings did not fall behind in Mathematics (specifically, in learning fractions) as much as did students who were included in classrooms that used frameworks such as UDL. The instruction provided in the separate settings included direct instruction in smaller groups with frequent progress monitoring and repeated direct instruction as needed. Although these results are commendable, I question why the interventions are a function of setting. If general education classrooms are meant to serve all students, then students with disabilities should be able to receive the supports of special education within the general education context. In other words, they should receive systematic and direct instruction as interventions without losing their membership in their general education classroom.

Having conducted the research to conceptualize this chapter, I am driven to think about the very nature of the notions we, as a society, have of the concept of disability. Many of our understandings and beliefs are rooted in or originate from scientific, psychological, and medical frameworks that seek to diagnose, label, and treat differences that do not conform to our view of "normal." Prior to conceptualization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), children with disabilities were routinely denied access to public education. This act, and its subsequent reauthorizations in 1997 and 2004 as IDEA and IDEIA, respectively, today provide children with disabilities a FAPE in the LRE. Although scholars with diverse ideological perspectives about educating children with disabilities agree that this was a giant leap forward, such legislation was informed largely via the medical and psychological models, which seek to provide interventions to "fix" abilities that deviate from the norm. A growing number of disability studies in education scholars from fields such as sociology, psychology, education, and special education advance the notion that disability is an idea and not a thing that needs to be treated (e.g., Baglieri et al., 2011). These scholars contend that people vary from one another in many ways, and some ways are noticeable. However, the idea that some differences are considered "disabilities" is the imposition of social judgment. This contention has led to developing a continuum-of-placements model that classifies disabilities as mild, moderate, or severe and places children in segregated classrooms depending on their level of discrepancy from the norm as arbitrated by psychological tests, observations, and institutional judgments.

Inclusive education has taken center stage in recent years. Some scholars believe inclusion is a civil right, and the LRE is the general education classroom. Advocates for inclusion espouse that there are different kinds of learners, and society should embrace diversity of learning, being, thinking, and doing. Clearly, it is important to frame disability as socially constructed. By advocating this notion, I do not deny biological aspects of impaired function. Impairments can have physical or neurological manifestations, but "disability" is what society creates as barriers as a result of an impairment. By articulating the theoretical principles as underpinnings for my conceptual framework, I center disabled youth as knowledge generators who exemplify what we can uncover if we imagine disability as a social construct at the intersection of the individual and

the environment. It has material realities, as well as a political identity rooted in resistance (Annamma, 2017; Annamma et al., 2013).

The three theoretical principles I outlined as foundational for my conceptual framework are based on T. Rose's (2016) research. He argued that variability is the norm in our student population and busts the myth of the "average" learner. The theoretical principles are the jaggedness, context, and pathways principles. Context matters and sometimes is the reason a child's impairment appears more significant. An adult or entity (e.g., school district) in charge of engineering the context then erects a barrier. However, students are multidimensional and vary on aspects such as memory, language, home situation, and reading ability. Hence, we cannot establish that students are one dimensional on a continuum from struggling to gifted. They, like everyone else, have profiles of strengths and weaknesses. The pathways principle espouses that there is no one "normal" way to reach a goal. Instead, it presents rationale for equifinality: There are many equally valid ways to reach the goal.

State directives in California and other U.S. states are shifting the policy climate towards more inclusive environments. Along with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. DOE (2015) issued a policy brief outlining their views on best practices to educate children with disabilities. The major thrust of the brief was inclusive education. Given the political climate and the push from parents advocating for inclusion, it is important to develop models for inclusion while maintaining a continuum of services to serve the needs of all students. However, models for implementing inclusive education need to be developing thoughtfully, based on research and evidence-based practices.

This chapter delved into one such conceptual framework based on the joint position statement set forth by the NAEYC and CEC (NPDCI, 2011). The proposed framework has three central tenets. The first centers on ensuring certain access to the curriculum using UDL principles. Philosophies such as UDL shift the paradigm of how we conceptualize and deliver instruction. The second tenet examines how students will participate in the day-to-day happenings of the classroom and receive the appropriate supports they need. For this, the framework proposes using tiered intervention and instructional approaches such as MTSS, which allow shifting the unit of analysis from the classroom to the school. Advocates of MTSS embed interventions and intensive supports within the school day and use frequent progress monitoring to determine how to roll out these interventions. The third tenet brings under scrutiny how teachers and staff will be supported and engaged in the professional scholarship and understanding that will enhance student learning. Central to the notion of supports are the voice of parents and building partnerships with families to acknowledge that the real experts on the team are the parents and, eventually, the children themselves. Communities of practice and PLCs are part of the supports required to build a solid knowledge base for all stakeholders involved in inclusive education.

Whereas the proposed framework's theoretical foundation rests on variability, its premise rests on the ideology of "everyone belongs." The most important step when building an inclusive school culture is to reach consensus on what defines inclusive practices. This definition should further be utilized to shape expectations for all students and put supports in place that will help them all succeed at school—however the students, their families, and the educational teams define that success. Policies that advocate and grow inclusive cultures will play a crucial role in realizing inclusive education because numerous barriers need to be circumvented.

PART 2: EMPIRICAL STUDY

Chapter 3: System-Level Processes That Promote Access

This chapter examines the system-level processes that were part of NEUSD's special education department and its inclusive programs. These processes were integral to the everyday functioning of the inclusive programs I describe and analyze. I divided this chapter into two sections. The first section discusses the ways in which the department promoted access for the students who were able to participate in these "inclusion programs." I place "inclusion programs" in quotes because this is how district stakeholders referred to them. The professional literature and CA DOE refer to them as inclusive *practices* and not as *programs*, as is evident from the recent initiative entitled, "Supporting Inclusive Practices" (2018). The difference in terminology stems from the belief that students with disabilities are first part of the regular education milieu, and then the special education services are put in place to support them in that general education setting. The second section of this chapter focuses on the barriers to access that these students, and other students on the margins who were ineligible for these programs, face.

Activities Fostering Access

Many students remain without the institutional mechanisms that support access and inclusion. Of the nearly 1,600 students who were eligible for special education services and placed in segregated classrooms in NEUSD, only about 120 (7.5%) were given spots in their "inclusion programs."

One way students received a placement in these programs was when their parents had the means to sue or threaten to sue the district for a placement in an inclusive general education classroom. The other mechanism by which they obtained access was if their previous IEP team recommended placement and their program administrator confirmed that there was a spot available. The team would continually debate the criteria for selecting a student for an inclusion "placement" and arrive at a determination that the student was ready to be included before making a recommendation. Being *ready* to be included meant that the student's deviance from the norm was minimal. For example, the team would consider a student with a diagnosis of autism and whose main challenges were social "deficits" to be a "good fit" if the student were academically on par with their grade-level peers. The team would never consider a student who exhibited aggressive behaviors to be a good fit because that student would not be able to pay attention in class and may cause problems for their peers. The team would consider a student with a speech-language impairment or specific learning disability to be a good fit as long as the student did not exhibit other behavior challenges and was not too far behind in academics.

The idea of "place" or "placement" in special education has its roots in the LRE continuum (Yell & Bateman, 2017). The law (IDEA, 2004) dictates that a continuum of options be available for students and considers the least restrictive option on that continuum to be the general education classroom. However, the existence of a continuum implies the availability of *other* options. The following themes emerged in the data relative to access to the general education setting and curricula within these inclusion programs.

Theme #1: Teachers Use Frameworks Such as UDL to Facilitate Access to General Education Classroom Curricula

The teachers appeared to engage the students in multiple ways. Their strategies were often in the form of offering choice and autonomy in the activities the students could do to prove their learning. The teachers took the time to explain the relevance of the subject matter to the students' everyday lives. Ms. LW is a third-grade general education teacher who, at the time of the study, had more than 15 years of teaching experience. Six students with disabilities were included in Ms. LW's classroom. The disability categories ranged from orthopedic impairments to autism, specific learning disability, and hearing impairment. In this observation from Mrs. LW's English Language Arts class, she was addressing all her students:

> Ms. LW is standing facing the students, who are seated in groups of four to six. A paraeducator is passing out a handout with an assignment. Ms. LW is very animated, and the students are listening in rapt attention. She is giving them directions on how to complete an assignment in which each student has to select a favorite book. She tells the students that the point of the assignment is to figure out the theme of the story. "You can write a song, draw, make a poster, create an infographic or video, or maybe you have some new way of doing something cool." She tells them that they should pay attention to the choice they make because that will tell them ways in which they learn best. She encourages them to file that information in their heads for future reference. She explains that more than just learning what she teaches them, they should all become aware of how each one of them learns. (Fieldnote, February 5, 2018)

This fieldnote shows that the teacher not only offered choice in how the students expressed their understanding, but also asked them to pay attention to what they chose as a means for them to know how they learn. These practices align with frameworks such as UDL, which seeks to help students develop effective learning practices (Glass et al., 2013; D. H. Rose & Meyer, 2002) that leverage purpose and motivation.

Teachers incorporated UDL in their day-to-day practices as they juggled curricular expectations, student needs, and IEP requirements and agreements. During teacher planning meetings, design features and adaptations were discussed to ensure sufficient teacher support towards the implementation.

These inclusion programs afforded certain programmatic structures (e.g., teacher planning meetings and teacher partnerships) that are discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Participation. An example of programmatic structure relevant to these programs is that a special education teacher and a general education teacher partner to provide inclusive supports and services to the students who participate. To provide the necessary supports on a day-to-day basis, weekly planning was necessary. Administrative support at these school sites made the meetings possible by providing common preparatory time within the teachers' workday.

The following fieldnote was from a teacher planning meeting I observed between a fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Steck, and the special education teacher, Mrs. Leonard.

> Mrs. Steck and Mrs. Leonard are sitting in Mrs. Steck's classroom. I am with them as a special education teacher who also works with the team. After some initial conversation about our families and children, we dive into planning the lesson. I listen to them plan and interject at times but mostly focus on capturing their conversation verbatim. They talk first

> about Ashish, a boy diagnosed with autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, who wanders around the classroom when the students are required to sit for more than 10 minutes at a time. Mrs. Steck reflects and ponders what she should be doing. She mentions stretch breaks, "a walk to a different group to do a think, pair, share and then at 10:30 a.m. a walk around the track." She says she wants to increase Ashish's stamina for attention: "By constantly pointing it out to him, I am not helping him learn or increase his stamina. All I do then is draw attention to him constantly and make his classmates know he is not attending." Mrs. Leonard then says that many children stop attending if the lecture is too long. [The students] are good about not showing they are not attending, but [their brains are] wandering all the same. Both teachers decide it is their job to figure this out collectively. They then agree to build movement breaks for all students and decide laughingly that they themselves might need it more. (Fieldnote, March 2, 2018)

In this excerpt, the teachers displayed a keen sense of understanding of how their students attend to instruction in class. They also acknowledged that although the target student may display lack of attention more noticeably, many other students may have stopped paying attention, as well. The teachers understood that most students are aware of the social norms around showing such behavior but probably allow their mind to wander anyway. The teachers took upon themselves the onus to initiate change and increase their focus and energy by incorporating natural breaks and changes of pace for the entire group to not stigmatize one child. They also put into practice the philosophy of UDL, which purports that changes to the curriculum or the way it is delivered—which may be necessary for *some* students—may be good for *all* students (D. H. Rose et al., 2018). Similarly, the breaks the teachers planned may have been necessary for some students but would benefit all.

The following interview and fieldnote illustrate how various teachers who participated in these inclusive programs displayed their understanding of their students' needs around access. The teachers incorporated small changes and "tweaks" into their routines to allow optimal access for students with disabilities. Ari was a girl with autism who was part of Mrs. King's second-grade classroom. Mrs. King observed that Ari participated better in class after she had a lesson preview before the lesson was taught in a group: "Ari learns better when she has already watched a short video about the content. I sent Mom an email with a link to the video the day before" (Interview, general education teacher, June 6, 2018). In this excerpt, the general education teacher displayed understanding of Ari's needs and the optimal ways in which Ari can gain access and learn effectively. Additionally, her statement that "Ari learns better when . . ." revealed that Mrs. King already engaged in the iterative design–thinking process associated with UDL. Although this change or tweak to instructional practice may have been minor, Mrs. King initiated a strong move by recruiting Ari's mother into the process. She made the mother privy to professionalized knowledge about her daughter's learning that will aid her should future situations such as this arise.

Ana was a student with an orthopedic impairment who had significant physical challenges. She needed assistance with all functional daily skills, such as toileting and eating. A one-on-one paraeducator was part of the supports provided to Ana. In this quote, Ms. LW referred to another student, Zeke, who also was a part of her classroom. Zeke did not have a disability but struggled with learning some concepts, especially in Mathematics. This is a direct quote from a monthly community-of-practice meeting in which teachers brainstormed problems, strategized solutions, and shared ideas (discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Supports).

> [Ms.] BL [special education teacher] gave me this idea to record my instruction in class and post it on Dropbox as a video because Ana missed a lot of instruction when she needed to use the bathroom frequently. So, I . . . put a tripod up and just hit record on the tablet and boom, I got me my video. Ana's [paraeducator] said, "Oh thank you because that just solved most of my problems. . . . I don't know how to explain some of those Math concepts, especially with all this common core stuff, and it is so much better when you do it, Ms. LW. I [thought], Well, if I am posting it for Ana, I'll send it to all of them. . . . Then Zeke's mom called me and said, "OMG, that was the best thing you did, Ms. LW, because Zeke and I have been struggling with this new way of doing Math, and he was always telling me that what I was telling him was not what the teacher said and so on. And now we watch it, and I say, 'Listen Zeke, this is how Ms. LW taught it to you; this is how you do it'." (Fieldnote, community of practice meeting, March 2018)

During a debrief with Ms. LW (general education teacher) and Ms. BL (special education teacher), both indicated that these simple, proactive design elements were easily implemented and benefited more than the original target audience. The teachers offered different ways for students to access the material presented to them. Some students may need to hear it and see it as the teacher teaches, but being able to watch what was taught in class again while doing homework also appeared beneficial. Ms. LW reported that many more parents called her and thanked her for sharing the videos because that allowed the parents to effectively help their children with homework. In this example, the videos fulfilled the original need for one student to later watch instruction missed when she had to take care of personal needs. The adaptation provided increased access for all students in the classroom (T. Rose, 2016). Ms. LW reported that her efficacy as a teacher was validated when she realized how simple changes and tweaks had a huge impact on her students' learning and participation.

The next fieldnote is an example of teacher teams acknowledging the needs that students presented and ways in which they designed instruction for students who typically are considered in the margins. Students who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices often represent less than 1.5% of the total student population (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998). When these students had a medical diagnosis that includes the word "degenerative," they usually were educated in segregated settings.

Ms. TC is a teacher with over 10 years of experience at the time of the study. She also had worked as a paraeducator prior to becoming a teacher. Ms. TC is also a parent of children with special needs and has a unique understanding of the stigma associated with special education. She made conscious efforts to proactively design for all students and always provide a wide array of options for students to learn the information and demonstrate their understanding. I worked with Ms. TC for 1 year as her special education co-teacher. The following excerpt was from my fieldnotes, but some data in quotation marks are her words that were seared in my memory. Ana is a young student with an orthopedic impairment (qualifying diagnosis to receive special education services). She uses a speech-generating device to communicate, activating her device using one finger. Including Ana in general education required proactive design elements beyond what is normally recommended when considering frameworks such as UDL and differentiated instruction. The following fieldnote is from a planning meeting between Ms. TC and me. We were in Ms. TC's classroom—Ms. TC sat behind her desk while I sat at a kidney-shaped table near the entrance. She said to me,

> Instead of always accommodating (gestures with "air quotation marks" for the word accommodating), Euh—I do not like that word, by the way—why don't we design with Ana in mind? What is the best way we think she can access, and [then we will] provide that as an option for all students? I bet many more students will choose that, too. That way, it's not like she is doing something different, but her strengths is part of the choices being offered to all. I don't accommodate or modify—I teach in a way that is optimal for my students. (Fieldnote, November 10, 2017)

This quote also demonstrated that the teacher kept the disabled student (Ana) front and center of their discussion, and the teacher's judgment of Ana was not unfavorably biased. Activists for the disabled call for unbiased judgment while acknowledging that being judgmental is part of being human (Berne, 2008). Based on the quote in the preceding paragraph, the teacher did not appear biased; instead, she wanted to provide optimal access for Ana. She seemed to realize that whatever Ana chose may be a choice for other students, as well. By keeping Ana's option as part of the menu offered to all students, the teacher also ensured that Ana would not be singled out as different in front of her peers. This is a key facet of "doing being inclusive."

An *ableist* notion is made visible even in the words, "accommodation" and "modification." These words imply that there is a norm, and that an accommodation or modification from that norm is needed for a disabled student to access and participate. By incorporating what she perceived to be Ana's strengths, the teacher in this example demonstrated that her view of Ana was not deficit oriented. Instead, she deployed a strengths-based orientation in planning her instruction. The teacher used proactive design and considered all the ways in which students learn and demonstrate understanding. This is the basis of UDL (CAST, 2018b), defined as a design-thinking approach that is iterative and provides options to students to demonstrate their learning.

Theme #2: Teams Challenge the Deficit Perspective and Design Normalizing Solutions

I not only observed various teams in action, but also was part of the teams as a special education teacher. The teachers spent considerable time discussing strategies, ideas, and solutions to the issues related to students with disabilities that cropped up in their classrooms. They did this during scheduled meetings, as well as in hallway conversations and via emails, text messages, and phone conversations.

Keerthan was an autistic boy in a kindergarten classroom. He loved to read books—especially stories about dogs—and to play on the monkey bars. He rode the small yellow bus to school every day. Sometimes, the bus ride took 45 minutes. When he arrived at school, he appeared very restless: He would run around the classroom and hug and squeeze his friends. Although his behavior could be interpreted as aggressive, his team (paraeducator and special education teacher) understood that it probably stemmed from having to sit on the bus for 45 minutes. Additionally, Keerthan had to wake up at 6:30 a.m. to board the bus by 7:00 a.m. The team considered that the combination of early rising and long bus rides caused him to be hyperactive and possibly tired. Although Keerthan was verbal, he was unable to articulate exactly how he felt. This is not atypical, given that he was only 5 years old. Following is a transcript from a conversation I observed and recorded among the general education teacher (Ms. Bela), special education teacher (Mrs. Leonard), and paraeducator (Jamila):

> *Ms. Bela*: Keerthan is feeling a little overwhelmed in the morning, and that is why he is hugging his classmates tightly. Ana didn't like it when he did that. What if we have him

go outside with Jamila and do some of the exercises he loves on the playground for about 10 minutes? That might help him regulate his energy before he comes to the carpet for circle time.
Mrs. Leonard: Let's do that. [I'm] pretty sure the occupational therapist will recommend that anyway. Jamila, OK?
Jamila: That works. I'll put out the basketball hoop, as well. He loves bouncing the ball.
Ms. Bela: OK, we have a plan, then.
Jamila: You know, all of this is because the bus picks him up at the crack of dawn, right? Who knows how long he has to sit on the bus every day? Seriously, we need to get the SPED [special education department] to take some action.
Mrs. Leonard: Exactly. [His] mom told me the bus pick-up is 7:00 a.m., sometimes 6:45 a.m. I don't want to call the psych[ologist] because we will be defining this as aggressive and maladaptive behavior and all the rabbit holes I don't want to venture near. You can tell the little guy is just restless from sitting for so long. It's just so damn annoying that we label this as defiant, aggressive, and maladaptive. It is none of that. Any 5-year-old will be squirmy if they were woken up at 6:30 a.m., barely out of bed, and shoved into a bus at 7:00 a.m. (Fieldnote, May 2017)

In this excerpt, the team understood that the student was not exhibiting aggressive behavior but was reacting to being in a confined space (school bus) before arriving at school. Allowing Keerthan to run and jump outside prior to entering the classroom permitted him the opportunity to stretch and regulate his body in ways *he* chose. It is important to highlight the enormity of this situation: In a general education classroom, Keerthan's running and squeezing behaviors could have triggered many other mechanisms had the team not reacted as they did. When another student is physically "harmed"—especially if the student causing the harm has an IEP—the psychologist is called in to "observe" the behavior. The psychologist writes a behavior intervention plan for the student, collects data, and documents the data as part of the student's IEP so future teams can be aware of the student's behavior needs and issues. This sets in motion a record for the student, even one as young as Keerthan. That is, schools begin interventions that are part of the fabric of how they operate and, in doing so, pathologize and even criminalize young people with disabilities (Annamma, 2017). By the time this student is in the ninth grade, his record could be littered with instances of behavior problems and the need for documented interventions. In this case, the team did not go down that path of pathology and intervention but chose instead to see the incident as lying at the intersection of the student and his environment (T. Rose, 2016).

If Keerthan's team had chosen a different trajectory in the way they viewed this child's behavior, then they may have deemed him "too much of a behavior issue to be educated within the general education context" and thus needing an "alternate placement." Invoking the knowledge of medical sciences (i.e., the child is autistic and noncompliant, and aggressive behavior considered a characteristic of this disability) and allowing it to interact with the school's vested power to recommend supervising and organizing the student's body in time and space (i.e., recommending a segregated placement based on behavior difficulties in the general education context) would have produced a very different outcome.

In another example, David was an autistic 6-year-old boy who was also gifted. He read text at the adult level and, at the time of the study, was writing a book on astronomy. As his special education teacher, I noticed that during the times designated as "social time," David would become

"anxious and not open up." In his mind (per my reflection, January 15, 2016), these designated times were recess, physical education, or other unstructured time in the classroom when students were allowed to play with toys and blocks.

> David is walking around the periphery at recess all the time. He came back after lunch yesterday and told me, "I wanted to use all the strategies you taught me, but I could not use them. So, I just walked around. When I see everyone and have to be talking, I cannot do it. I get sad because I want to talk and make friends. I am scared. I kept saying all the things you taught me—walk up to a friend, say hey, and talk about what they are doing." I think I should designate the time as "academic" [rather than "social"] so David will not get anxious, and select a topic of his interest so he could talk about it. This would allow his peers to see that he was indeed social and had many things to share. (Reflexive journal, January 15, 2016)

These excerpts exemplify how teachers normalized the supports the children needed (Moore, 2017). Instead of designating their behaviors as pathological and resulting from the disability, the teachers viewed the situations with a lens that was devoid of the medical-deficit orientation. In such a medical-deficit orientation, these behaviors would be classified as "lack of socialization skills" or "unable to connect with peers"—as though autistic individuals were devoid of the ability or the inclination to connect with others.

Theme #3: Team Members Give Prime Importance to Accurate Documentation of Student Needs, Goals, and Services

Team members demonstrated in many ways that the students' needs drove the goals and services the team provided. The teams appeared to ensure that the documentation was clear and had a "legal" feel to it. They seemed to want to ensure that if they, individually, were no longer in the picture, the students' needs would not be compromised. In the following transcript excerpt from a team meeting, the team—including Mrs. King (general education teacher), Ms. Ng (special education teacher), and Ms. Certo (speech-language pathologist)—discussed Benjamin's needs and those of his father (Mr. Liu) and what they need to capture at the next IEP meeting. This transcript was not of an IEP meeting but of a team discussion of supports and day-to-day planning needed for Benjamin. Benjamin was autistic and struggled to make friends. He also blurted out answers all the time and had some difficulty sustaining attention in the classroom.

> *Mr. Liu*: When I check his homework calendar, sometimes he has started writing but not written fully from the whiteboard.
> *Mrs. King:* Thank you for bringing that to my attention. I will walk over and make sure he copies it or have my para[educator] check his homework calendar.
> *Ms. Ng*: Mrs. King, what if we also sent a picture of the whiteboard with homework notices every day? That way, just in case he does not copy it all or you can't check for some reason, Dad has it?
> *Mrs. King*: Great idea. I will text it to you, Mr. Liu. Another thing is he is blurting out answers all the time in class. I developed a signal with him (shows signal) and now he's getting better. But Mr. Bellamy, the Science teacher, says he is being disruptive in class.

Ms. Ng: Then we should show him the signal and have him use it. Let's see how that works. I want to make sure we discuss the playground stuff. I can see he is sad that he is unable to play.
Mr. Liu: Yes, every day at home, he complains that he has no friends, and no one is calling him to play at home. I know the problems, but my wife and I don't know what to do. We try inviting people, and they come, but we have to constantly be there, or he wanders away from the peer.
Ms. Certo: Maybe I'll start coming to recess and coaching him a bit? Also, maybe I can do a social playtime that I facilitate to help him make some peer connections.
Mrs. King: Great. Maybe if you tell me what you're doing, when we have choosing time on Friday—when they get free play—I can do a small group structured playtime, too?
Ms. Ng: All these ideas are great. Let's make sure we write all this in the IEP. Otherwise, it is all lost after we leave the room. And what is to say, if we all disappear or Dad and Mom decide to move, the new team should always know what has worked and what supports are in place for Benjamin.
Ms. Certo and Mrs. King: (nod yes)
Ms. Certo: Yes, for sure. Need to document—so important to capture in IEP. (Fieldnote, team meeting with parent, August 10, 2019)

Discussions such as this parent meeting appeared multiple times in my data within the context of IEP meetings, team discussions, and focus groups. This example demonstrated the deep understanding the team members had for the protections allowed by the law and how to use them effectively for the student.

From my observation of this meeting and many others, there appeared to be some underlying tension about documenting the student's needs and letting those needs drive the services and goals. The teams realized that documenting needs using the typical deficit orientation (represented in IEP jargon) was necessary to access the services the student needed. However, some members indicated discomfort with the way IEPs required that deficit orientation to prevail. For example, to add occupational therapy services, there had to be a "demonstrated need" (Artifact, District Special Education Handbook) that warrants an assessment before services can be provided. To document that need, the team had to show all the ways in which the student deviated from the norm—and thus establish a baseline for someone with specialized knowledge to come in and provide support. Examining this rule from the vantage of a school district trying to work within finite funding, it is easy to see how professionals may be called to service or consult for more students than the district's budget can reasonably afford. Such mechanisms ensure that their services are provided only to those who absolutely need them. This is evident from the mantra, "Needs drive goals, which drive services," which is repeated often and to all every time a service request arises. Nevertheless, these practices contribute to the structural mechanisms (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012) that perpetuate ableist notions of what is "normal" and how far one must deviate from "normal" to receive support.

Theme #4: Teams Work With IEPs' Institutional Power and Legal Complexity to Facilitate Access to Needed Supports

Noting a behavior or support in the IEP ensures it becomes part of the legal documentation, and hence, compliance bound. Such documentation also demonstrates the team's awareness of the

legal ramifications of the details provided because whatever is noted in the IEP warrants relevance and portability of the supports—even if the student moves out of the school, school district, or even state. At the same time, should legal action be taken, there will be no questions as to what types of services and levels of support were made available for the student.

The IEP notes pages contain detailed descriptions of what worked for the student. They are intentional in their need to capture such information and share with the student's next set of teachers. For example, Ana (from a previous example) had a one-on-one paraeducator who, owing to Ana's health, communication, and other physical needs, needed to be highly trained. The team agreed that they should specify in the IEP the training level required for (any of) Ana's paraeducators. They also noted a contingency plan—a second fully trained paraeducator should be able to take over if Ana's primary paraeducator needed time off or was absent. The following fieldnote captured the exact wording I incorporated into Ana's IEP as her case manager:

> Ana will always receive support from a trained paraeducator. This training and support will be provided under the supervision of the case manager and related service providers with input from the parents. A second back-up paraeducator will be trained in all aspects—health, toileting, communication, and academics. This is to ensure that Ana will always be with a trained paraeducator should her primary paraeducator take time off or go on leave. (Fieldnote, February 1, 2018)

By reading and participating in numerous IEP meetings at these school sites, I determined that whereas an IEP tends to be driven by students' "needs" with little considerations of their strengths, these teams made a point to also showcase students' abilities. *Needs* signal deficits or deviations from the expected norm that must transpire before the student even qualifies to receive an IEP. This deficit perspective in action is also noticeable, for example, when examining the IEP document as an artifact. Barely two to three *lines* were available to describe the student's strengths; numerous *pages* were set aside to discuss the ways in which the student deviates from the norm.

In another avenue teams used to increase collaborative problem-solving for students with complex needs, teams designated within the IEP that they would meet regularly outside the IEP context and include the parent was an integral part of those meetings. When such a designation was made within the IEP, it lent the parent a front-row seat into the planning process before implementation. Additionally, parents provided input and monitored their children's progress. These team meetings lacked the formality of IEP meetings because team meetings were neither prescriptive nor formal.

When students had complex needs, frequent (e.g., every 5–6 weeks) team meetings were scheduled with all service providers and parents as integral team members. At the meetings, the team reviewed collected data, changed course as needed, assigned roles and responsibilities, adapted content material, and provided support to the parent at home. I wrote the upcoming fieldnote after witnessing a conversation between a parent and a special education teacher.

The student, Alok, was autistic, nonverbal, and used a speech-generating device to communicate. He also had other health needs arising from unrelated neurological issues. Alok had transferred from another school. The transition and the opportunity to come to this new school site (where Mrs. Ryan was the teacher) was hard fought. The parents received this placement as part of a settlement reached with the district following legal action. The new team wanted to ensure a smooth transition and was cognizant of what the parents had endured. Because I was a member of the transition process, I was privy to the discussions and conversations and in tune with my

thoughts and feelings regarding this matter. I had watched Alok's mother fight for what she believed was the right place for her son—in a general education classroom alongside his peers—but she was also aware that Alok had complex needs. She had confided her concerns about the rollout of the transition and was keen to be a part of the planning and implementation at the new school. This fieldnote captured the conversation as Mrs. Ryan spoke to the parent (not exact words but written while they were speaking):

> The purpose of these team meetings is to figure out Alok's educational needs together. I don't think I know everything about him—as a parent, you are the expert. I value the input you are going to give us; we are grateful for your time. There is no way any of us in this team know everything about inclusion. I am slowly recognizing that not everything I do is very accessible, but I want to learn to make my service to the students better. (Fieldnote, April 22, 2018)

This teacher communicated with the parent her intent to schedule throughout the year team meetings that did not have the formality or documentation of IEP meetings. These less formal meetings would allow the team to proactively consider and ensure agreements made in the IEP meeting were implemented in the required day-to-day processes. When students have complex needs, multiple facets (medical needs, communication, physical) must be considered and planned for. Given what this parent had experienced with the previous school's team and her apprehensions about the transition, her participation in the team meetings represented a fruitful step in her child's educational journey.

Theme #5: Teams Brainstorm Best Possible Solutions Using AT Tools That Increase Academic Access

The school teams were proactive in considering various AT tools (both high and low technology) that would increase access for disabled students. They engaged in collaborative meetings to solicit ideas and advice from experts. Because finances were always addressed at internal meetings, and teams were cautioned about not making wasteful purchases, the teams were diligent about conducting trials and capitalizing on free offers from various technology companies. More importantly, this ensured the selections they made were the right fit for the students.

AJ received special education services under the category of "Other Health Impairments" due to a traumatic brain injury at birth. She had trouble navigating the narrow pathways in the classrooms. I wrote the following fieldnote after a discussion with her general education and special education teachers. My role at this meeting was that of an inclusion specialist with knowledge about AT tools and the UDL framework.

> AJ needs to be able to see the whiteboard during Math. She cannot get up and walk to the board if she needs to. And if she does not see it right in front of her, how can she access what is going on? Most students, if they are unable to see something written on a white board, may crane their neck or walk up to get a closer look. AJ cannot do that and many times she does not participate or complete the required work. Team wants to know if I can trial the Kaptivo [digital whiteboard/camera] for her. I suggested going to one of the classrooms where it has been installed and testing it. Once we know it works, bring it up in an IEP, document the need for such a device, and get it approved for purchase. That way, it will follow her every year. (Fieldnote, March 22, 2018)

The team brainstormed ideas for technological tools that allowed optimal access for a student with an orthopedic disability. One team member had heard about companies using a tool that allowed remote access to meetings for employees who were unable to attend in person. The tool was a small camera that livestreamed what was written on a whiteboard to a device/tablet in front of the student. The team used the IEP to document the need for such a device and thereby ensured this support would be available for the student every year. This exemplifies an advantage of documenting in an IEP: The parent would not have to reestablish need for such technological assists every year, thus making access to the curriculum more seamless for students.

Arav qualified for special education under the diagnostic category of autism. In his classroom, notetaking was part of the required behavior—many educators felt it was a necessary skill, especially useful as students moved on to high school. However, Arav would flap his hands when he paid attention to instruction; it allowed him to concentrate. The team realized that Arav was better able to learn by paying close attention than by taking notes. Thus, they decided to use the whiteboard camera used for AJ (previous paragraph). By discussing with colleagues, observing use of the camera, and testing its utility themselves, the team figured out how to utilize it as a notetaking device that would automatically capture what was being taught. Then, they made it available for all students (an application of UDL). A general education teacher explained:

> You know me, I was first thinking Arav needs to learn to take notes, so maybe we need to teach him not to flap. But . . . that felt not right to me at all, . . . not OK. So I watched him one time, let him flap, and I taught. You know what? He listened. I asked him questions that he would have had to listen to know. So I thought it was obvious that he listens better when he stims [self-stimulating behavior]—let him stim. We give Arav the notes and [give them] to anyone else who needs them. When he listens, he definitely learns better. That's my priority.
>
> Plus, the Kaptivo is pretty neat. It captures everything, and [afterward] I have it as a pdf [file]. I just post it on Google Classroom so everyone has access to it. I was watching people at the staff meeting: All teachers stim. Some are knitting, some twirling their hair, some pushing their chairs back, one almost fell (laughs loudly). Maybe, as adults, we do it and mask it in acceptable ways that society does not think as odd. But who are we to say what is odd? (Interview, general education teacher, September 12, 2018)

Many tools such as those described earlier were utilized for students in innovative ways. The preceding quote demonstrated how the teams understood mismatches in their expectations of certain normalizing behaviors (such as notetaking) hindered the students' full, meaningful participation. By recognizing these mismatches, the team could devise innovative solutions. Additionally, the teacher's comment about stimming—"Who are we to say what is odd?"—indicates how autistic behavior is sometimes constructed with a deficit-driven, disease-ridden language as opposed to viewing it as a difference (Nolan & McBride, 2015). By comparing what teachers do to self-regulate during staff meetings (knitting, twirling hair, etc.), she drew parallels to other behaviors that could be considered odd but were not—because societal norms deemed them acceptable. In articulating that all she cared about was Arav's learning, this teacher delivered a strong message to her peers about viewing his learning difference as just that—a difference and not a deficit.

The teacher's decisions were formalized in Arav's IEP, which wields a level of authority. If the IEP were to be transferred to the next grade or the next school, the accommodations would be viewed and implemented as they had already been discussed and agreed to. California law requires parental consent to change anything in an IEP: If the parent does not consent, the IEP and its parts "stay put" (Community Alliance for Special Education, 2019). This also means that only what was agreed upon can be implemented. The parent has the right to file a due process complaint if any parts of the IEP are not implemented. Although parents typically do not like to take these courses of action, the option is available. That knowledge alone can deter school districts from committing grave errors related to providing accommodations.

Theme #6: Teachers Use Tools That Facilitate Social-Emotional Support in the Classroom in Universal Ways

The teachers used tools and strategies to help students self-regulate their emotions. In the field of special education, a plethora of these tools—many recommended by behavior analysts—are used to assist students. Usually board certified and trained in the field of applied behavior analysis, these behavior specialists help students "extinguish" problem behaviors and engage in acceptable classroom behaviors. Some general education and special education teachers chose to use their recommended tools as classroom-wide strategies to not stigmatize one student from the rest of the students. The student described in the following focus-group transcript, Valerie, had a diagnosis of autism. She was easily overwhelmed when presented with new tasks and tended to run around the classroom saying, "I am going home now," and then, "All done, all done, all done." Her teacher invested the time to talk with Valerie's parents to understand what Valerie was communicating when she behaved that way. With input from her parents and the occupational therapist, the team chose to implement the "zones of regulation" strategy in the classroom. When it became evident that Valerie was responding well to the new strategy, the teacher expanded it as a class-wide strategy.

> I use "zones of regulation" as a social-emotional regulation tool for all my first graders. Valerie used the chart, and she used to calm down when she got agitated. I chose to have all students learn it because we all have our days when we need to self-regulate and say, "It's OK, it'll be fine, we just need to take a deep breath and go on." But if I had taught this only to Valerie, then it would be like she had issues and so needs to use this thing that only she and Mrs. Cesario know about. I mean, this is what her friends will think, right? But if it is something we all know and use at different times, it is cool. Today, you are not feeling good, so you need to use it; tomorrow it maybe someone else. That way, we are not calling someone out as different from everyone else. We say we all need it, and so it is a tool in our toolbox. (Focus group, general education teachers, May 28, 2018)

This quote demonstrated a self-regulation tool the teacher used in her classroom. More importantly, it is another indicator of how teachers of these inclusive classrooms were mindful to not stigmatize the supports provided as exclusive to children with disabilities. It further signals the teacher's acknowledgement of the variances that exists in how all the children (and the teacher) may need tools to self-regulate. She did not assign it as a "problem" that disabled students face.

In addition to recognizing exclusionary practices, the teams began to unpack the impact of those practices on students:

> I tell my students, "Sit, stand, flap, move. Do what you need to learn. Take a break when you need to." I say this to my students and build in times for breaks because everyone needs it. It should not be, "Oh you have an IEP and hence you need a break because you cannot listen for more than 2 minutes." He is listening with his butt up in air on the carpet; he is listening when he is flapping his hands. (Focus group, special education teachers, May 24, 2018)

In the preceding quote, Mrs. Ryan was talking about a student named Joe, who is autistic. Joe did not like to sit in the traditional way expected of students in kindergarten classrooms—cross-legged on the carpet, hands interlocked like a snowball on their laps, and eyes fixed on the teacher to indicate they are listening intently to what is being said. This is an example of the stigma that disabled students experience when they need to take breaks to self-regulate. That is, their "display" of behaviors (e.g., flapping or walking to listen) when they lose regulation is outside the contours of expected behavior. By incorporating it into her teaching routine, Mrs. Ryan built an opportunity for self-regulation and normalized the need for it. Such encounters with inclusion and exclusion form fundamental elements of who we are (Holmes, 2020). By making assumptions about how a student needs to behave in a classroom more inclusive of the various ways in which students choose to arrange their bodies in time and space, the teachers promoted a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Barriers to Access

In this section, I present barriers to access that I observed and experienced as a participant observer at this district. Although there was a concerted effort to be inclusive, barriers were still erected—sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently—to prevent the programs from continuing or expanding to other school sites. These barriers were evident in the policies adopted or implemented, ideological differences, and attitudes that translated into narratives about the disabled, and in the physical and virtual spaces of schools.

Theme #7: District Policies Pose Barriers at the Classroom and School Levels

In NEUSD, disabled students who participated in the inclusion program were not given spots on the general education roster. That is, although they were part of a general education classroom and received instruction from a general education teacher, they were not on the teacher's class roster and thus lacked true membership. A name on a roster may seem a minor issue at first glance, but the inequities tied to this lack of membership crept into official capacities in many ways.

First, it begged the question, "Why not?" The reason people in school-district power positions gave was, "It is related to funding." When I probed further, I was told that the district would "lose ADA [average daily attendance] monies" if students with disabilities who had more significant needs (i.e., those classified as mild–moderate or moderate–severe) were placed on the general education roster. I inquired with other districts and was told that ADA monies—which the state allocates based on ADA for every student who attends school—had nothing to do with disability category or diagnosis. All districts receive ADA monies regardless of the setting (general

or special education) in which students are placed. This information refuted the study district's initial rationale.

The next reason given was that it would become too expensive to have students on both the general education and the special education rosters ("dual rostering"). However, this point contradicted the prevailing practices. Almost 1,900 students served under the category entitled, "resources students" (Artifact, SELPA) were members of general education classrooms (on the class roster) and yet received services from a resource specialist (i.e., a special education teacher with the same credentials as that of teachers who serve students in inclusion programs). If it is financially feasible and possible to roster the resource students (who are identified using the same process), why not also students with disabilities who are in the inclusion programs?

The reason these students did not have a seat on the roster was because it cost more to allocate general education seats for students with disabilities. Upper-management district personnel unequivocally told me that the inclusion program could continue as long as it was "cost neutral." That is, as long as it cost the same as it would to educate the same students in segregated (special education, which is what these students were designated to be) settings, the district would include them in general education. However, if it began to cost more, then it would no longer be feasible to continue including them in general education. In the following reflexive journal entry, I detailed my impressions after a meeting with a senior district official (Dr. M). Ms. Jacobs, a mid-level manager in charge of special education, also was present. Ms. Jacobs and I had been advocating for seats on the general education roster and hoped we would learn at this meeting that the students received a seat. It did not go as anticipated.

> I was a little nervous walking into the conference room with a long table and executive chairs around it. The chairs stood out because they were unlike any chairs we see in classrooms and schools. Dr. M was waiting and led Ms. Jacobs and me into the room. In a very pleasant conversation, Dr. M told me she had heard good things about how the inclusion programs were being run and that the kids were doing well. She congratulated me and the team on the recent award we received from the state for being a model program. She then said it is an excellent program I could expand organically—as long as people at that school site were open to it. She also said that any expansion will have to be "cost neutral."
>
> I asked that students with disabilities be given spots on the general education roster. I explained the advantages, including how we would no longer need a separate memorandum of understanding with the teacher's union every year. I also told her that the parents wanted this for their children, as well. Many general education teachers had spoken up at many public forums. However, Dr. M was quite firm that expanding the roster would not be "cost neutral" and hence was not an option. She thanked me for my work and showed me the door. (Reflexive journal, meeting with district official Dr. M and special education manager Ms. Jacobs, March 21, 2018)

The adoption of this position by NEUSD's upper management made teachers and staff working at the schools feel powerless. I communicated the results of the meeting to a close associate (Ms. Summer):

Me: I felt crushed when I heard her say "cost neutral."

> *Ms. Summer*: Really, cost neutral? It did not matter that the parents had said how much they valued their kids being in general education [and] wanted a spot on the roster for them? It did not matter that all these general education teachers had come forward and spoken up about why it was important to have full membership? It did not matter that every stakeholder at the ground level had spoken up and said, "This is important for us"? It seems like nothing we say is of any use or heard by upper management. We don't have the backing of the district office for these initiatives. *That* is what they are saying to us when they say they want it to be "cost neutral." (Fieldnote, March 22, 2018)

Learning the stance of the district office's upper management produced a ground swell of support among teachers and staff towards rostering seats for students with disabilities. Once their unhappiness became apparent, management formed an advisory committee to "tell us how we can get this done"—to much jubilation among the teachers and lower-level administrators, who felt they had "been heard."

The advisory committee outlined a plan that demonstrated how the rostering could work. Notably, the expected costs to implement the proposal equated to that of one new school bus. Further, they showed that district-wide transportation costs would decrease over 5 to 7 years because students would then attend neighborhood schools and therefore would not need to be bussed to the other end of town. The committee presented the plan to upper management, after being forewarned that the cabinet members (recipients of the proposal) were typically frank and honest in their feedback and it was not meant to hurt feelings. The committee was very receptive and welcomed the feedback; most of its members wanted to see the initiative rolled out and made available for the greater student body. After a round of revisions and edits, the plan was again presented to upper management.

There was silence after the second meeting. The committee was disbanded and told, "Due to budgetary constraints, we [upper management] have to temporarily shelve this initiative." Three months after upper management emailed this message to the advisory committee members, the school district purchased 55 new school buses.

How did this lack of a general education seat affect day-to-day workings in a classroom and school? This issue was seen many ways. For instance, teachers did not have access to these students' report cards and, unless the school secretary paid close attention, the students' names were not even posted on bulletin-board lists showing who their teachers were at the start of the school year. True to societal issues that prevail regarding marginalizing persons with disabilities, these students were left at the margins—never to appear alongside their friends.

The issue of membership begins with each student. The reverberations of district-office policy adoptions (or lack thereof) can affect the classroom and school's daily workings. In the study case, it seemed incomprehensible that the district shelved these initiatives while the state was citing the district for placing too many students in segregated settings. Although following this initiative would have at least demonstrated that the district was making (or attempting to make) progress towards improving those placement numbers, the district did not view it as a priority. School board meeting discussions and business department budget presentations offered some clues as to how the district viewed special education in general. Words such as "encroachment" were often used to describe the (apparently frequent) instances when special education exceeded budget. Because special education is a federal mandate, it fell on the school district to move monies from the general fund to "fund the mandate." This painted the special education department as a

division that was intruding on what was considered the lawful property of general education students. Creating such artificial divisions between students in the same community and city tended to "other" the students with disabilities and the department entrusted with serving them. This was problematic because board meetings were public, and parents of students who were typically developing could form a sense that these "other students" were taking monies that otherwise would be used for children without disabilities. This could divide the community and pit the general education and special education factions against one another.

Theme #8: Narratives About the Disabled Affect Placement Opportunities and "Who" Was "Fit" to Be Included

Many differing ideologies were brought to the forefront in this analysis. Some conflicted with the task on hand—that is, to include children with disabilities in general education classrooms. The word *inclusion* conjures an image where all children are welcome and celebrated in classrooms without artificially erected barriers that separate them because of their disabilities. However, within the movement towards inclusion—perhaps due to lack of funding to provide this opportunity for all students—was a tendency to want a particular "type" of disabled student who fit the category of an "inclusion student" (words in quotation marks appeared in the interview transcripts with various district stakeholders more than 78 times). The following interview remark was in response to a comment by another teacher about the lack of seats in the inclusion programs: In each grade level, only three or four spots were available; however, the number of students whose parents wanted these programs for their children far exceeded the spots:

> Let's make sure we give the spots to deserving students. She has seizures and is not really walking independently. She will be better served in a moderate–severe setting. Instead, let's give this seat to KK. He is on grade level with academics and just has some behavior issues. I mean, we have to give it to kids who deserve it, right? (Interview, general education teacher group, June 4, 2018)

This quote made visible notions about how "disabled" a child is appeared to influence the child's opportunity to participate in general education settings. Inadvertently, some school personnel were deciding who was "most deserving" of a FAPE in the LRE by gatekeeping that placement.

I attended many interactions, informal meetings, interviews, and placement meetings by virtue of my role within the district and as a participant observer collecting data. During these communications, I engaged in discussions focused on who could be included, how disabled they could be, and what the normative expectations were of the general education setting. Therein, certain normative expectations of the "types" of students who could be included in general education settings emerged. Although neither state nor federal law (IDEA, 2004) required students with disabilities to keep up in general education settings to merit a seat, this unwritten rule appeared to be in action. In fact, court rulings since Brown v. Board of Education (1954) have stated that separate is inherently unequal.

At an administrative-level meeting where my colleague (Ms. Summer) and I had been invited to speak about "criteria for inclusion programs," we both repeatedly stated we did not believe in criteria for inclusion. We reiterated that the word *inclusion* implies *all* students, and we could not provide criteria to help determine who was a "good fit" to be included in general education settings. That meeting was a very charged one, and the discussion evolved to talks about

students who were pending placement in various programs around the district. As is normal at these meetings, no student names were used (only students' initials or characteristics). A team member made the following comment—which seared in my mind as though by a branding iron:

> We sat around a rectangular conference table for the admin meeting, discussing criteria for inclusion programs. Ms. Summer and I exchanged looks because we had already stated we did not think there should be any criteria for who can be included. The discussion went on and on about why criteria were needed and maybe we should go back and think about it. I stated again that I believed *any* child can and should be included; no criteria were needed.
>
> Then the discussion evolved to discussing which child on the list could be offered the inclusion placement, as though Ms. Summer and I did not exist or were eavesdropping. Our input was no longer solicited. They discussed various students and their characteristics. One comment especially stuck in my head (Ms. Summer later remembered it the same way and reported feeling disgusted by it): "What is his IQ? Oh—a 70. That is a straight moderate placement." (Fieldnote, October 19, 2019)

This quote is representative of narratives circulated within schools about normative expectations and their linkages to educational settings. It demonstrated the speaker's notion that if a child has an IQ of 70, then the student should be placed in a segregated setting (moderate SDC) typically comprising other students at similar cognitive functioning levels. It explicated the thought process that transpired before educational placement for children with disabilities—without the needed score, the child would not qualify to be in a general education setting. However, IDEA (2004) indicated that students must be educated in the general education setting with all necessary supports and services—and a separate placement should be considered only once the IEP team determined that they had exhausted all other avenues for success in general education settings (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Nevertheless, narratives such as that exemplified in the preceding quote preclude access to general education settings on the basis of IQ scores. Further, that narrative was not the words of just one speaker; this example indicated a larger narrative and the very reason segregated placements existed at the various levels.

My further examination of grading documents (e.g., the following artifact excerpt) corroborated the mode of thinking demonstrated in the preceding quote. The documents showed that various stakeholders interpreted the laws and unwritten rules as students who need further modifications should receive them in segregated settings. During meetings, stakeholders frequently cited the document I analyzed as indicative of district directives about who could be in general education or who needed to be removed, and that students requiring modifications could not be educated in general education classrooms. They based this interpretation on "pass/no pass" being listed only under "SDC" (a segregated placement); hence, students who needed "pass/no pass" grades rather than letter grades had to receive them only in an SDC or segregated placement.

> How Should Students in SDC Mild–Moderate Programs Be Graded?
>
> Parents should be given authentic feedback as to whether the student is or is not meeting grade-level standards. If the student is meeting the grade-level standard, then a notation on the report card should indicate "Passing." If the student is not meeting the grade-level standard, then a notation on the report card should indicate "Not Passing." See IEP goals regarding progress on goals in this area. (Artifact, Grading and Report Cards, retrieved December 1, 2019)

Although this artifact did not state that students cannot receive pass/no pass grades in general education settings, the most frequent interpretation was that because pass/no pass grades were modifications to the standard, the students could receive them only in an SDC.

Stakeholders perceived that students with lower-than-average IQs would need modifications to standards and hence access to alternate settings must be pursued. As such, students with below-average IQs wanting placement in a general education setting would receive that inclusion slot only if the parents advocated loudly and demonstrated they were well versed in the law. This is how normative expectations (the need to appear, behave, and possess certain skill and ability levels) and educational settings (general education, segregated classrooms) are linked (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

The earlier quote about the student's IQ also reflected the notion that students were one-dimensional on a continuum from struggling to gifted and consideration of placing the child in a segregated setting could be based on only one score—the IQ score. Using one score to indicate placement discounted any strengths the children—even children with below-average IQ scores—may have possessed. It also placed all emphasis of being in a school and classroom on academics alone. A rebuttal to this argument is that children with significant intellectual disabilities should focus on "life skills" so they could go "out into the world." Van der Klift and Kunc (2017) questioned this notion, asking whether general education classrooms then failed to teach life skills to children who were considered "typical." If students in general education classrooms appeared adequately prepared to "enter into the world," then why could not students with disabilities also learn "life skills" alongside them? How can students with disabilities "enter the world" if they were not allowed to "enter" that world with their first experiences in school?

Another prevalent ideology related to what was considered normal and acceptable in a general education classroom. Preconceived ableist notions constantly surfaced as to how students should act, look, and behave and to holding disabled students to these standards. I highlight some instances that were pointed out to me or that surfaced in fieldnotes and interviews. As presented in Themes #2 and #6, some students did not like to sit in the conventional cross-legged way teachers expected.

> Keerthan liked to place his head on the carpet, with his rear end sticking up in the air, and rub his hands on the carpet in a circular motion. The teacher found this very atypical and kept stressing that he needed to sit more conventionally [cross-legged, hands like snowballs] like everyone else, because being in general education meant being able to act "normal" like everyone else. (Fieldnote, January 10, 2019)

As noted in Theme #1, Ana used an AAC device to communicate and used one finger to activate the device.

> This places a strain on her eyes; she sometimes put her head down to rest for a few minutes and is then usually rejuvenated. I noticed this over the years and tell the teachers, so they do not think she is not paying attention. But this year was exceptionally hard. A particular teacher constantly questions me when Ana puts her head down. [The teacher] told me that maybe [Ana] is too tired, and this is all too much for her; maybe we need to consider what is best for this child and not have her in general education; maybe she needs a slower pace where she can sleep when she needs to. I had to stop her and say, "Ana is usually listening that way, too." Just because she puts her head down does not mean she is not listening. Ana

> loves being in class with her peers. She is very stimulated by what she learns. I worry when teachers make these assumptions about her. (Fieldnote, October 21, 2019)

These two fieldnotes showed how some members in the school community had preconceived notions about what and how a student should act and be in a general education classroom. They demonstrated the comparisons executed and the norms to which all students were expected to conform—the certain "able" way in which students needed to act in classrooms. Deviations from that norm appeared to trigger thoughts related to those students not being a good fit for inclusion, visions of medical fragility, and general education being "too much" for the child to handle. In the first example, the teacher wanted Keerthan to act in a way she considered normal, although Keerthan was using his body in creative ways to self-regulate and attend. Because these ways were not "normal" for a general education setting based on ableist assumptions, the teacher was uncomfortable with them.

In the second example, the teacher assumed that every time Ana put her head on the table, she was tired. Instead, Ana put her head down to self-regulate; sometimes, she adopted that position to listen. Again, the teacher did not consider this normal and hence questioned whether the way Ana chose to place her body indicated that the lesson content was too overwhelming for Ana to absorb. Other students in Ana's classroom may not put their heads down, but neither are they listening at all times. The teacher could ask simple questions to reveal the extent to which they are paying attention. As adults who sit in meetings or lectures, we also tend to allow our brains to wander for a few minutes. We are not asked to demonstrate at every juncture our suitability to be in that setting. However, it appears that children with disabilities must constantly prove themselves worthy of that inclusion opportunity and conform to the same norms as their typically developing peers related to how they should arrange their body.

Over the many years of working and being a doctoral student and researcher, I developed strong bonds with many parents within the community. As a parent of two children, I also have that experience and lens as part of who I am and the work I do. A parent of a child in the inclusion program shared with me a comment, which I captured in my notes:

> Malia [parent of a child with a disability who is included] and I were standing outside the school campus and talking about some homework that was due. I gave her some ideas about what needed to be done and how to support her child at home. There had been some issues with a related-service provider, and I sensed that something was bothering Malia deeply. I asked if she wanted to talk about anything else. She said without giving a name, "I do not doubt [service provider] is capable of providing great service to my child but I feel they doubt what my child is capable of, and that is driving them to have really low expectations." (Fieldnote, September 1, 2019)

In this fieldnote, the parent expressed her perception of an attitudinal barrier towards her child. That is, she was concerned that the specialist working with her student had low expectations because they perceived the student had low ability. This was another example of an ideological barrier that results from notions around disabled students not having the capacity to learn and grow—and hence having low expectations of them.

Theme #9: Physical and Virtual Access Barriers Inhibit General Education Classroom Membership

Barriers to physical access result from mismatches in the physical environment that students experience as exclusionary. These may involve inadequate physical space. However, the mindset of the person in charge of the space—and who could decide to make it more inclusive—more often compounded the contextual limitations.

The student, Marcus, had an orthopedic impairment and needed to use a touch screen instead of a desktop computer. Because he used only one or two fingers to type, the keyboard in the school's computer lab was not optimal for his use. I wrote the following fieldnote after an observation I was invited to do in my capacity as an inclusion specialist:

> I was asked to provide feedback on how to help Marcus during various prep periods, such as for Science class, Computer class, and so forth. I asked to first observe, telling the team that I would meet with them after the observation to brainstorm ideas. I observed the teacher asking Marcus to stay in the classroom when everyone else went to the lab. She said the space at the lab will not work for him and instead let him stay in the classroom with the para[educator]. (Fieldnote, June 10, 2018)

This fieldnote helped demonstrate that exclusion occurs in physical space meant for *all* students. In this case specifically, the physical space (lab), as well as the thought process (teacher), were exclusionary. It highlighted the extent to which mismatches or barriers are present in school environments. Although the teacher's suggestion that Marcus stay in the classroom so he would not be frustrated with the physical set-up in the lab was well meaning, it nonetheless was also exclusionary.

In addition to the roster issue discussed earlier in this chapter, this short section highlights other issues related to membership. General education teachers' lack of access to all students' data erected barriers to accessing information for routine classroom functions, such as visits to the computer lab. It also led teachers and staff to create terms or labels as they searched for ways in which to refer to this group of students who lacked full membership in their classrooms. In the following quote from a group interview, the general education teacher highlighted the barrier she faced in accessing information for her students who were not on her roster and exposed language used to refer to these students. For instance, instead of "receiving resource service," the teacher called this group "inclusion students" because they were added to the class list after the required number of spots had been filled.

> My inclusion students are not on my roster; they are on the special ed roster. I go to the lab and want the kids to do Lexia, and Allan has issues logging on. Well, I can't do anything because I can't access his login details. I text Ms. C to send me her details so I can log in and fix it, but she does not get the message until an hour later. So Allan could not do Lexia like everyone else. I had to have him do something else—frustration in our daily day-to-day, y'know? We keep asking, just give us access to our students that we teach every day. (Focus group, general education teachers, May 22, 2018)

This barrier resulted from a decision made at the top echelons of the school district office. Financial constraints and misconceptions about how special education funding may be reduced as a result of students being in the general education classroom fueled the policy that these students would not have a "spot" on the general education roster. The repercussions of that decision

permeated to the student's level and made aspects of his day inaccessible. The following paragraph unpacks the realities of this situation and juxtapositions it with what the law directs LEA to do.

Students with disabilities who had needs considered "mild–moderate" or "moderate–severe" were typically placed in SDC in this school district. These classrooms were staffed with a special education teacher and paraeducators with the idea that these highly trained teachers would deliver instruction in a manner that was more easily accessible and at a "slower pace" (this often-used term at IEP meetings and placement discussions occurred 89 times in my data). Teachers in California are credentialed as either general education (multiple subject or single subject) or special education (mild–moderate or extensive support needs; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2020). Most California school districts used segregated classrooms on "public integrated facilities" (as described in the Special Education Information System, which electronically stores and transmits IEP documents to CA DOE) to educate students with disabilities. The idea was that specialized needs required specialized services best delivered in separate settings.

Although this separation may be the norm, state and federal laws (IDEA, 2004) demonstrated a priority towards providing *inclusive* education. For instance, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and IDEA (2004), later reauthorized in 2007, emphasized providing special education services in the LRE. Although this wording was always open for interpretation and debate, Congress articulated:

> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible. (IDEA, 2004, para. (c)(1)).

This quotation demonstrated that federal law advocates for students with disabilities to have membership in general education classrooms to the maximum extent appropriate. Funding formulas were structured so that all students were first funded as general education students (AB 602; California Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019), with special-education-related funding then added to the regular funding. School district officials who were not fully knowledgeable about how state and federal funding works continued to misinterpret and hence posed barriers (sometimes unintended) to membership in general education classrooms. In NEUSD, the leadership chose to include students (in select programs) by still classifying them as "mild–moderate" or "moderate–severe" students and assigning them to a special education teacher. This is why the general education teacher in the preceding quotation, and many others like her, lamented how these decisions affected their daily teaching practice and made otherwise-inclusive environments inaccessible.

Discussion

A common thread emerged from the thematic analyses presented in this chapter: Recognizing exclusion was the first step towards designing for inclusion (Holmes, 2020). This was

evident in the various discussions, interactions in the staff lounge, text messages, documents, and artifacts. Teachers and teams started examining what it was about the people and the environment that made it exclusionary.

This attitude made visible the afterthought and possible mismatches that perhaps existed in the way learning was designed. Arav, who in a Theme #5 example needed to stim by flapping his hands but in doing so could not take notes during the lecture, was in a mismatched situation. Why were notes not made available prior to class so he could stim, self-regulate, *and* learn? When the teacher started utilizing a device to take notes in class and made it available to all students, it became a source of innovation and a catalyst for creativity.

When David (example in Theme #2) came to his teacher and expressed his frustration about not being able to muster courage to talk to his friends, the teacher realized David's exclusion was *by design*. The intent here is not to say his peers excluded him, as much as "normal" ways of initiating conversation stifled him. By supporting the interaction with a topic that would interest David, the teacher assumed that he was social—he both wanted and knew how to interact. The teachers and school staff that I observed acted on the knowledge that disability exists at the intersection of the individual and the environment, and they made the environment more accessible for students.

Assumptions that children such as David were not social or were incapable of understanding others' mental states perpetuates ableist assumptions. I observed many teachers who worked with disabled students within these inclusion programs repeatedly try to identify the root cause of the issues the students faced. They understood that there were a multitude of reasons people are in social spaces together—to be with other people or one person, a love of a topic, or anything else. Witnessing young children's agony at not being able to fit into the ways considered "normal" begs the question, "Are we asking disabled youth to confine to contours that normal people define as the only way to do certain things?" That would be considered an ableist notion.

Many teachers I observed and interacted with were changing the ways in which students needed to display that they were focused and engaged in the act of learning. The teachers realized that requirement alone could sometimes stifle disabled students, whose bodies may not self-regulate when required within the imagined boundaries of accepted displays of behavior. By incorporating and encouraging all displays of behavior while learning (sitting, standing, walking, flapping, stimming), the teachers were building a more inclusive understanding of expected ways to act in a classroom.

In this chapter, I also highlighted various barriers to access that students, parents, teachers, and other staff encountered while running and participating in inclusive programs. My analysis showed that one of the biggest barriers to access was the lack of membership on the general education class roster. Although this may appear to be an issue that could be fixed by just ensuring all students' names were part of the list, it turned out to be not so simple. This lack of membership arose for a myriad of reasons ranging from funding issues and overcrowding at some schools to district-level policies. It caused significant barriers to access for students with disabilities, as well as for their teachers, during their everyday routines. Ideological barriers surfaced in the data, visible in various narratives about the disabled. To be included, students were expected to have near-normal skills in their academic and social capabilities and, in many instances, to rearrange their bodies in the way typical children do. Keerthan was expected to sit cross-legged instead of placing his ears on the carpet and rubbing his arms to self-regulate. Ana lowered her head to the desk to rest her eyes but was perceived as overwhelmed by the academics. Children who did not

have normative IQ scores were deemed better candidates for segregated classrooms. All these examples emphasized the deficit model that is predominant in special education. Many students with disabilities spend their entire school careers working on their deficits instead of being allowed to develop their strengths like every other child in a regular classroom is.

Chapter 4: Programmatic Structures That Facilitate and Inhibit Participation

This chapter examines the programmatic structures the NEUSD used to facilitate inclusive education. Analysis revealed that although there were structures that promoted inclusion, barriers were juxtaposed alongside those facilitators. This chapter affords an in-depth exploration of both.

Facilitators of Participation

As evident in Chapter 3 detailing access to general education, some parents were able to play a key role in advocating for their children's needs. The extent of parental involvement rested on many factors, including socioeconomic status, education level, and ethnicity. District statistics established that the majority of the student population in this district comprised two minorities: Asian Indian and Asian Chinese; Asians constituted more than 60% of the student population. The district's geographic location at the heart of the technology industry meant that the families' predominant occupation was in the technology sector. Asians tended to be employed as engineers or work within the technology sector in this district, thus elevating their socioeconomic status. It was observed that some Asian (Indian and Chinese) parents had the financial means to hire legal advocates and attorneys to demand what was appropriate from the district. They were also highly educated (graduate degrees) and had the means for one parent (in two-parent households) to forfeit their job and focus on their children's educational needs.

Theme #1: Parent's Knowledge of Legal Structures and Their Advocacy Help Build a Carefully Orchestrated Narrative to Improve and Make Meaningful the Participatory Structures for the Student

The following fieldnote illustrates how parents advocated and improved participation opportunities for their children by investing time, effort, and money into legal processes that ensured these opportunities. The relationship between the school district and parents is a complex one with dynamics that appear hard to discern. However, I used my knowledge of the district's inner workings and my relationships with parents to inform the analysis and untangle the co-dependencies, situational power imbalances, and legal protections that govern action. Given the messy nature of the data, it was hard to separate the analytic dimensions without losing the entirety of the picture. Hence, the communication modalities and participant roles are also embedded in the analysis.

In the following analysis, I used a related set of fieldnotes from one IEP meeting to demonstrate how one set of parents carefully built a strengths-based narrative for their daughter to ensure meaningful participation in all aspects of her school day. With my unique vantage as a researcher and educator within this district (participant observer), I witnessed the frustrations that parents—and sometimes school personnel who viewed the parents as demanding—experienced. Given the unique nature of the legal mandate that is the IEP, this sort of advocacy is necessary.

> The IEP meeting (Part 1) was scheduled for 8.30 a.m. on a Thursday. Present were the parents (mother and father), student (for the first 15 minutes), program specialist, school principal, AAC specialist, AT specialist, adapted physical education teacher, general education teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and I (as education specialist who is also the case manager, i.e., participant observer). All participants were seated around a square table with a copy of pages 1 and 2 of the IEP document in the center. There

> were four copies of the document, all with the word's "draft" written prominently on them. Importantly, if the parents were presented a copy of the IEP without "draft" written on it, it would imply that the team had made a "predetermination," and the parents would have been denied an opportunity to provide "meaningful input." (Fieldnote, October 29, 2017)

In this fieldnote, the words and phrases in quotation marks are part of the legal verbiage of the IDEA (2004) and its predecessor, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975). Additionally, the fact that only two pages of the possibly 45-page document were on the table indicates the extent to which parent input would be solicited at and covered during this meeting. I had been Maya's case manager for 7 years and was aware that the IEP typically had seven to 10 parts. Although 90% of district-level IEP meetings were conducted for about an hour once a year, some parents were strong advocates and had legal counsel; hence, multiple meeting parts were needed.

The first item on the agenda was for the student to say something to the team. This student, Maya, was nonverbal and used an AAC device to communicate. Her mode of access was eye gaze, which meant she used her eyes to activate icons in front of her to construct her utterance. The following fieldnote details what Maya said to her IEP team:

> Maya has her device in front of her and begins speaking. Her mother prompts her through her prepared remarks to the team. Maya talks about her interests, what she likes at school (hanging out with her friends), subjects she is interested in (Science), and her goals for the upcoming year. (Fieldnote, October 29, 2017)

By speaking about herself as someone who liked being with her friends, Maya portrayed herself as being in a socially cohesive group. She also indicated that her peers, of their free will, chose to "hang out" with her. By constructing the position of having interests in "Science," Maya chose to have her listeners focus on her likes, given that this was her IEP meeting. This demonstrated that the frame Maya made noticeable to her listeners was one of information sharing (Goffman, 1979). An IEP typically focuses on "needs" and how those needs drive "goals," which in turn drive the "services" offered. By focusing the team's attention on something she enjoyed in school, Maya effectively drove the narrative towards her interests instead of her deficits. She portrayed herself as a self-determined individual ensconced in a social context that was enriched by friendships and interests instead of one that dissected her needs in a clinical fashion.

Face is an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes, albeit an image that others may share—as when a person makes a good showing for their profession or religion by making a good showing for themselves. In his essay, "On Face-Work," Goffman (1967) outlined that individuals in any social encounter attempt to act out a certain line, not unlike a "pick-up line" a suitor in a bar might use. This "line," according to Goffman, expresses the individual's view of the encounter. In the IEP scenario, this accounts for what Maya considered when presenting herself. More so, based on the nature of Maya's disability and my intimate knowledge of how she co-constructed her speech with her communication partner (in this instance, her mother), I sensed that the words Maya expressed were carefully crafted with input from her mother. Whereas Maya was the animator and co-author, her mother adopted the role of a co-constructing author. Although this was not explicitly stated at the meeting, knowledge of Maya's mode of communication afforded me a peek into how she possibly constructed her speech. What I want to clarify to the reader is that the mother was not controlling the narrative that Maya presented, but instead

mentoring her to be aware of the unequal power dynamics and clinical gaze that the IEP adopts. In doing so, the mother was helping Maya elevate her own voice and personhood. This implied that Maya carefully constructed her "face" to be viewed and listened to by not only participants of her meeting, but also the invisible member of this meeting—the law. Face is socially based and constructed in response to and in the presence of others (Redmond, 2015). Maya's parents always recorded her IEP meetings. Whenever parents record a meeting, the district also makes a recording in case a dispute arises in court.

Maya left the meeting after she presented her statement, and then her parents presented their vision for their daughter's education. The parent vision statement is not a required part of the IEP; however, some parents choose to share it with their team. The law provided a list of procedural safeguards that regulate the relationship between the parents and the school district, rather than a set of detailed rights (Engel, 1991). Thus, the fate of many disabled students rests on the unique relationships that are forged between parents and schools. This unique relationship unfolded in this case as the team attempted to attain the goal of "appropriate education" for Maya. The vision statement (as discussed and excerpted in the next paragraphs) is one tool the parents used to help focus the team on Maya's strengths and their goals.

> The mother stated that the IEP as a process adopts a deficit perspective. "When I leave the IEP, I can only think of what my child cannot do, and that is a lot." [The mother] wanted the team to think of Maya as an individual with dreams and goals and aspirations like all other kids and provide an educational plan that keeps Maya front and center instead of dissecting her into individual parts of what she cannot do. This was the reason [the mother] gave as to why she and her husband came up with the idea of a vision statement. (Fieldnote, conversation with parent, October 15, 2017)

The following fieldnotes are from the meeting and excerpts of the vision statement the parents presented:

> The mother read the vision statement to entire team. This was my favorite part of the meeting because I value the way these parents build the team cohesively around Maya and I think this is a tool that should be used. I am typing the first few sentences below as the mother is reading it because I want to think about it again later. This is significant in how IEPs can be effective. (Fieldnote, October 29, 2017)
>
> Maya is a bright, hardworking girl affected by . . . Syndrome. As has been seen in West Valley Elementary [School (pseudonym)], Maya thrives in a positive and nurturing environment that believes in her, understands her, and supports her. Maya has made steady gains in all areas through the years, has strong friendships in school and the community, and is growing to be a confident young girl. She likes to be challenged, loves to learn, and is very proud of her achievements. (Excerpt of statement read by Maya's mother at IEP meeting, October 29, 2007)

In the following paragraphs, I analyze aspects of the vision statement and demonstrate the narrative of Maya—carefully orchestrated by her parents—that the team witnessed. The vision statement laid the groundwork for meaningful participation. The mother's choice of the phrase, "bright, hardworking girl" gives insight into how the parents would like the observers to view their child. They appeared to want to negate any assumptions about their daughter, who may need stand-by assistance at all times, as being lazy (Bull, 2002)—even though no one at the meeting (or before

it) explicitly stated such. The parents' use of the words, "affected by," also indicated their stance. "Affected by" denoted that something was affecting or acting upon Maya. The image the parents conjured was one of a bright child upon whom an external entity—a syndrome—that was acting and causing her to have issues.

The use of the phrase, "as has been seen," was also important. The absence of pronouns is significant. It portrayed a voice of evidence, an impersonal voice stating facts that were being projected as shared objective knowledge that could not be disputed. "Thrives" is an evaluative word; it has an affective valence as part of its connotative structure. It leaps out at the reader as if to say, "Pay attention to me. This is important"—and as a word that has polar opposites—"stagnates" or "declines." The use of the word, "thrives," attracts even more significance in the case of Maya's diagnosis, which the medical literature portrays as a "degenerative disorder" with a period of decline that begins in the teenage years. The sentence that followed the word talked of a positive environment within a cocoon of friendships and community, indicating a person-centered philosophy (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2000). It situated Maya in an enmeshed concentric circle of support with a focus on deepening relationships and increasing interdependence. The careful use of language in this vision statement indicated not only the parents' knowledge of their daughter's disability and the needs that arise, but also their heightened awareness of how the world could potentially view Maya.

The statement in the parent vision about Maya liking to be challenged linked to sometimes-unstated assumptions about the ability of disabled people to engage in and enjoy challenging activities. Social psychologists such as Dweck (2000) considered that there are two implicit theories of intelligence. The incremental theory views intelligence as malleable and that it can be increased through effort. The entity theory perceives intelligence to be a fixed and unchangeable trait, an internal characteristic that cannot be changed by outside influences. Dweck further demonstrated that these self-theories influence how people viewed others' intelligence as malleable or fixed. This may be especially true for individuals with disabilities that are considered to have an impact on cognition. By establishing and stating that their daughter enjoys challenges and loves to learn, Maya's parents were constructing a picture of an individual who also had the ability to learn, grow, and change.

So far in this chapter, I analyzed and discussed excerpts from the parent vision statement. The first question asked of parents after the commencement of the IEP process is, "What are your concerns related to your child's educational progress?" When asked this question, parents usually stated their concerns. At this meeting, Maya's parents produced a prepared parent-concerns statement and asked to include it as part of the IEP document. This demonstrated their understanding of not only the IEP process, but also legal procedural safeguards in place that require school districts to address every concern raised. If the parents ever pursued due process, legal teams on both sides of the table would first examine the aspect of parent concerns. Again, this demonstrated an orchestration of events as though it were viewed by an invisible participant—the judicial system. In the following paragraphs, I analyze the parent-concerns statement and put forth an argument that juxtaposes the picture they painted using the vision statement with the one they portrayed in the concerns document to reveal their understanding of the system. Their understanding and strategic manipulation of the system was what increased their daughter's membership in the general education classroom and school.

In the parent-concern statement, the parents individually addressed each area of need. For example, they addressed academic concerns, positioning them as they related to physical mobility

and access, emotional regulation, and language and communication needs. In so doing, they documented in the IEP their concerns in each area, highlighted needs, and required that services (from various service providers) be accounted for and time be allocated. Parent participation in the IEP process requires a level of professional knowledge and engagement in each specialist area, especially for children with complex needs (Harry, 2008). According to Maya's mother, she decided to give up her professional career as a software engineer to focus her energies on providing care and ensuring educational access for her daughter. She considered this advocacy to be her full-time job and built a formidable knowledge base in each discipline.

Normally, people need to acquire special knowledge and skills to gain access to situations (Harry, 2008), such as the IEP process, that may involve unequal power dynamics. Formality is one way in which access may be constrained: Many contexts that involve unequal power dynamics require people to participate in formal situations (as does the IEP) and to learn particular forms of jargon or politeness strategies.

> In the parent-concerns statement, parents used the word "access" in two instances. Parent stated that one concerns is that their child "has access to age-appropriate vocabulary." The other concern, which really is about Maya being able to participate alongside her peers, is that "material is adapted and prepared ahead of time, so she has access along with her regular [typically developing] peers." (Fieldnote, October 29 2017)

Access is concerned with who has access to certain types of discourse or roles and who controls the access of other people. Therefore, access strongly relates to power. Van Dijk (1985) pointed out that in some discourse situations, certain roles afford more access than others, such as what can be discussed or the setting or timing of an interaction. For instance, in education, teachers have more control over educational discourse than do students, whereas in health settings, doctors have more control over the discourse. Access (or lack of) therefore plays an important role in reinforcing existing power relations. In Maya's case, having access to age-appropriate vocabulary was crucial because her AAC speech-generating device did not have an academic vocabulary. Hence, it is incumbent on professionals to ensure that Maya had access; otherwise, she would be unable to meaningfully participate in her lessons. The second excerpt from the parent concern statement—"access along with her regular [typically developing] peers"—implied that Maya could experience a loss of access by virtue of being disabled. This question did not arise for her peers; they had certain access. By juxtaposing the issue with Maya's typical peers, her parents explicated the power inequality; by documenting it, they ensured it would be addressed in a timely fashion.

Using my observations and participation in one part of Maya's IEP meetings and my knowledge as an educator who for many years has been involved with this student, I demonstrated the necessary legal and programmatic structures that existed to ensure student participation in school. In Chapter 5, Supports, I embed discourse analytic tools to illustrate how district personnel shut down parents who brought legitimate participation concerns during meetings. Although this was not done intentionally to hurt or belittle parents, barricading funding and protecting and justifying district decisions and programs become paramount to the personnel working the frontlines with parents.

Theme #2: Schools Use Screeners and Frequent Progress Monitoring to Design Fluid and Flexible Groups to Provide Targeted Interventions to All Students

Whereas the previous fieldnotes focused on a single student with significant needs and how parental advocacy built participatory structures for her, the following data illustrate broader programmatic structures and decisions that facilitated meaningful participation. Tiered models of instruction and intervention were utilized in various ways to increase participation in general education. At two school sites, the administration and teachers adopted universal screeners in the subject areas of English and Mathematics. These screeners were administered to all students at specific, regular intervals during the year. They allowed the schools to monitor student learning and address any issues early. The advantage of using screeners in this manner was that no one group of students (e.g., students receiving special education services) were targeted. Instead, the screeners and progress-monitoring tools were used for everyone in every grade level as a way to understand what and how students learned. They also emphasized having fluid and flexible groups for intervention. That is, no one set of students always received intervention. Depending on what was being taught, some students needed intervention, and others did not. These practices were rooted in evidence and prescribed as part of frameworks such as MTSS (Kurth et al., 2018; Sailor & Roger, 2006). The following fieldnote is from a meeting I attended in which we examined data from a progress-monitoring assessment.

> I was in a grade-level meeting today with Mrs. Gonzales, Mrs. Ryan, and Mrs. Patel. We looked at the data for second grade. Mrs. Gonzales pointed out that every progress monitoring we have given in the last 6 months has shown that it is not the same kids who struggle every time; sometimes, certain kids have more needs. [Mrs. Gonzales] has five students with mild-to-moderate needs in her classroom, and none have needed intervention more than any other student in her class. She was excited and happy because she felt the bottom line was that all kids need help with different things. Just because one has a disability does not mean they are always a lower performing student. The teachers agreed that administering these progress-monitoring measures confirmed that. Mrs. Patel also thought these assessments allowed her to present good data at parent–teacher conferences. (Fieldnote, November 10, 2018)

This fieldnote represented many interviews and other fieldnotes in my dataset about school staff viewing progress monitoring as a good tool to provide embedded interventions. Other teachers also reported that using a consistent form of data collection allowed them to gauge student learning and provide appropriate scaffolding strategies for students. There was a range in the types of assessments teachers used. Some were simple oral checks for understanding, others paper-and-pencil tests, and yet others computer-based tests; some were one-on-one assessments (especially in kindergarten and first grade), and others were reading fluencies. The literature on providing intervention using systems (such as MTSS) and response to intervention advocated for the use of progress-monitoring assessments upon which each grade-level team agreed (Choi, 2020; Dufour, 2013). Although MTSS comprised both academic and behavioral components, these schools focused on the academic assessments.

Using these progress-monitoring assessments increased student participation in general education and ensured that interventions for students were provided within the general education context. The greatest shift was in how teachers perceived students with disabilities who were

included. Teachers who were part of inclusion programs at these school sites no longer saw these students as the lowest performing. Instead, they began seeing that students had jagged learning profiles, and no one student was either a struggling learner or a gifted learner. The following excerpt is from an interview with an inclusion specialist who supported multiple sites where students with disabilities were fully included in general education classrooms.

> I have been seeing these progress-monitoring [tools] being given at four school sites now, and I can safely say not any one student struggles with every skill we teach. Usually, our kids (I mean kids with IEPs) are seen as the struggling kids. "Oh, they always need help," "They are low," "They don't get it." These are comments that I hear. But now that we are doing the [progress-monitoring] assessments, it is pretty obvious that everyone has areas of need and everyone has things they are good at. Like, really? We needed these tests to show us proof of concept . . . that we are all different and we all have different strengths and weaknesses? Anyway, I am so glad that teachers and admin are seeing that now, and there is at least no push-back in these programs—most of them—about our kids belonging in general education or in separate classrooms. (Interview, special education teacher, May 10, 2018)

Principals and teachers frequently collaborated to create schedules that provided targeted interventions based on the assessments. Grade-appropriate general education material and other strategies were used for all students needing intervention. They formed fluid and flexible groups for 6-week periods, after which the students were reassessed. As part of my job description for the district, I consulted with teachers at other school sites. Because I was privy to the various ways in which students with disabilities were educated at the other school sites, I understood how those sites provided supports for students with disabilities in their classrooms. At most other schools, students were educated in segregated SDCs classified as mild–moderate, moderate–severe, or intensive instruction, depending on the severity of the student's disability. Although mild–moderate classrooms are supposed to receive standards-based instruction using general education curriculum, this for the most part was not the case. Instead, teachers typically used the specific intervention curriculum as their main, rather than supplemental, curriculum—as was the case in general education classrooms. Students in moderate–severe and intensive instruction classrooms were taught using a functional-skills curriculum because these students were perceived as not functioning at grade level; hence, they would not benefit from any material used in general education classrooms. This again exemplified how normative expectations were linked to educational settings.

As Van der Klift and Kunc (2017) made explicit, if students are perceived as not having the ability, then they are not given the opportunity. Without the opportunity, they never gain the experiences and remain presumed incompetent. This is the vicious cycle of segregated settings, whereby students with disabilities are always behind their typical peers and never able to catch up to gain reentry into the general education classrooms. It effectively denies students with disabilities the right to participate by presuming they do not have the ability. In contrast, the inclusion programs I studied had students with learning profiles similar to those in the mild–moderate and moderate–severe classrooms. When given access and allowed to participate, these students demonstrated that they were able to make progress. The following artifact (Table 1) demonstrates the growth of the students in the inclusive classrooms. Although these data do not come from a standardized assessment, they are nonetheless from a measure used to assess and track progress of

all students in a grade across all 30 schools in the district. Hence, they were valid for the stakeholders and shared with the parents.

Table 1

Data from Artifact: "Data Donuts Comparison Kindergarten Fall 2017/18"

Standard	Inclusive			Special day classes	General education
	Kindergarten 1	Kindergarten 2	Kindergarten 3	Mild–moderate	Kindergarten
Exceeded	33%	22%	43%	0	43%
Met	17%	33%	29%	0	39%
Nearly met	17%	11%	14%	40%	5%
Not met	33%	33%	14%	60%	13%

The question of whether the students have the academic ability to be included is irrelevant; *everyone* has a right to be a part of the general education classroom. That, however, was not the on-the-ground reality. As I outline in the Barriers section of this chapter (Theme 5), children with disabilities must sometimes work twice as hard as typical children to demonstrate that they merit a spot in the general education classroom. In the artifact data (Table 1), the three inclusive kindergarten classrooms (part of this study) were compared to a (randomly selected mild–moderate SDC) segregated classroom and a (randomly selected) general education kindergarten classroom. Notably, the students who were included in the general education classrooms (Kindergartens 1, 2, and 3) were also classified as having mild to moderate needs (i.e., similar to students in the mild–moderate SDC). The data presented in Table 1 show that the students in the inclusive classrooms performed nearly as well as their typically developing peers did in the general education classroom. However, 60% of the students in the segregated setting did not meet standards. Although this comparison is on only one data point, I have observed similar outcomes for almost 5 years.

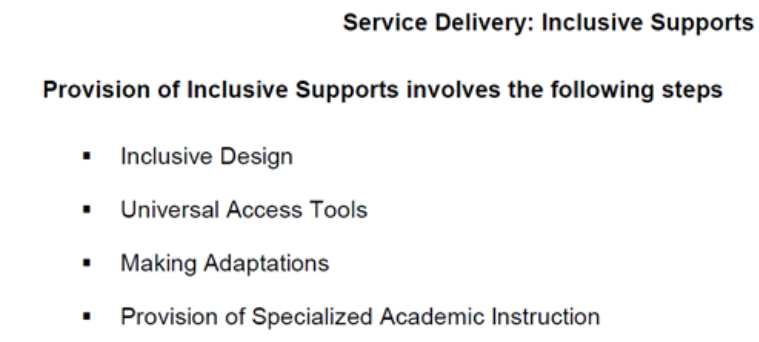
Theme #3: Providing Inclusive Supports Included Integrating Strategies and Practices Aligned With UDL or Prescribed in Frameworks Such as MTSS and Other Well-Researched Systematic Instructional Practices Described in the Literature

Further examination of artifacts revealed many research-based and evidence-based practices used in the classrooms. Not only did the overarching ideas and strategies deployed align with UDL and MTSS, but also there was evidence of thoughtfully designed adaptations tailored to the needs of students who might be considered outliers. One such artifact widely shared within all inclusion programs was a document entitled, "Service Delivery Model: Inclusive Design," which revealed specific participatory structures and strategies used (Appendix).

The first section of the document contained a succinct description of what "provision of inclusive supports" entailed (Figure 1). Inclusive design, the first part, involves co-planning between the general education teacher and the special education teacher. This was noted as being of prime importance within this model (and thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5, Supports). Universal access tools (as outlined in Chapter 3, Access) were also described, and examples were provided in the artifact. The two pieces relevant to participation involved making adaptations and providing specialized instruction. The following snapshots from the artifact uncover the sorts of adaptations made to the curriculum to facilitate effective participation.

Figure 1

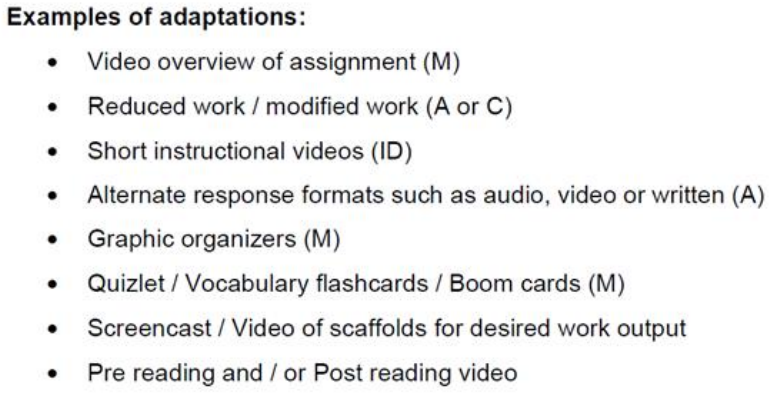
Service Delivery Model (Section 1) Screenshot (Artifact)



The second section of the document outlined types of adaptations spanning four categories (instructional delivery, materials, content, and instructional activity) and provided relevant examples of tools that the teachers could use (Figure 2). My observations across the classrooms corroborated the teachers' usage of the various tools for all students. The document further outlined how SAI would be provided to students with disabilities. "Specialized academic instruction" is the legal term used to describe special education services provided by the education specialist (credentialed special education teacher). Adapting the curriculum was outlined as one step; the next important step in the process described was that of delivering the specialized support. After I outline this next piece of the document, I compare how instruction is delivered within SDC settings.

Figure 2

Service Delivery Model (Section 2) Screenshot (Artifact)



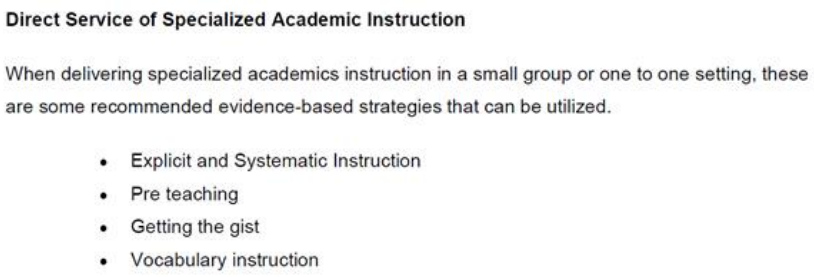
Examples of adaptations:

- Video overview of assignment (M)
- Reduced work / modified work (A or C)
- Short instructional videos (ID)
- Alternate response formats such as audio, video or written (A)
- Graphic organizers (M)
- Quizlet / Vocabulary flashcards / Boom cards (M)
- Screencast / Video of scaffolds for desired work output
- Pre reading and / or Post reading video

The third section of the document listed strategies that could be used to provide the specialized instruction. The strategies were explicit instruction (Smith et al, 2016), preteaching (Berg & Wehby, 2013), getting the gist (Pollack et al., 2020), and vocabulary instruction (Figure 3). These strategies were used to teach grade-level content within general education classrooms and made available to the students with disabilities and to any other students who needed the specific strategy or intervention.

Figure 3

Service Delivery Model (Section 3) Screenshot (Artifact)



Direct Service of Specialized Academic Instruction

When delivering specialized academics instruction in a small group or one to one setting, these are some recommended evidence-based strategies that can be utilized.

- Explicit and Systematic Instruction
- Pre teaching
- Getting the gist
- Vocabulary instruction

Theme #4: Although the Law States Special Education Is a Service and not a Place, Enactment Does not Reflect Intent; Specific Accommodations, Modifications, and Adaptations Built Participatory Structures That Benefit Students With Disabilities

In multiple IEP meetings (which usually occurred separate from meetings related to inclusion programs), teams decided whether students needed additional interventions or strategies and recommended an SDC. Their rationale for the special class was that strategies such as those

outlined in the previous section were not available in general education classrooms. However, in reality, those strategies were not available because the team did not provide them—this was a choice the team made. Although adaptations and specialized strategies may be used in SDC settings, my observations and participation in numerous IEP meetings made evident that the content taught was of a lower grade level, and students with disabilities were not expected to learn on par with their grade-level peers. When the mild–moderate SDC model was explained and presented at a public meeting describing programs the district offered, a teacher described it as "students have access to the general education curriculum." However, my observations over the years revealed that that was not the case. In my fieldnotes from multiple IEP meetings, SDC teachers shared details of their programs and specified that the content they taught was at least one or two grade levels lower than in general education classrooms. Following are excerpts from interviews with parents who stipulated that the reason they wanted their child to be included in general education was because expectations in segregated settings were always lower; hence, their children were not even exposed to grade-level content.

> If I did not fight and push for inclusion, my kid will be in SDC, and he will never learn. Why? Because there is no expectation [in SDC] that he will learn. The program specialist says they will have access to general education, but that is not true. When I asked the SDC teacher, she said she had kindergarten curriculum but no second-grade curriculum—and so she was using the kindergarten curriculum with the second graders. What is the expectation then? That as a second grader, my child is capable of learning only kindergarten-level stuff? (Interview, parent, May 29, 2018)

This parent's experience was not unique; many families reported similar situations. Families who were aware of these practices did not want their children to be in segregated settings. Their children may have had learning difficulties and needed different approaches to learning and additional time to learn the content or produce the work. Although the settings in which they were placed provided those varied approaches and additional time, they did not keep pace with the general education curriculum. Expectations were lower in SDCs. At some point, the students lagged behind to such a great extent that they could never gain (re)entry to the general education classroom. Alternatively, using approaches such as UDL—wherein students are allowed multiple means of engagement, representation, and ways to express their understanding—proactively provides the variance in approaches the students need to succeed. Additionally, practices called *volume reduction* and *prioritization of standards*, which were used in classrooms participating in the inclusion programs, proved extremely beneficial. They allowed the students with disabilities to continue receiving standards-based education alongside their peers.

Volume reduction is a practice that reduces the work output a student needs to produce. It is not a special education practice, but one used for all students. To implement volume reduction effectively, it is important to prioritize the learning goals. Most school districts, including NEUSD, chose standards they considered priorities in the domains of each subject. From the list of overall standards for each subject at every grade level, a certain number were designated as priority standards. The rest were deemed supplemental standards. The priority standards were those that all students at that grade level must be exposed to and learn in order to progress to the next grade level.

Research has shown that when teachers must teach, assess, and then reteach every standard, students receive an education that is "a mile wide and an inch deep." This all-standards approach

also made it appear that every standard was of equal importance and could lead to students leaving one grade level not fully prepared for the next. Eventually, students in higher grades may start falling behind. To avoid this predicament, districts around the country have started prioritizing standards to provide in-depth instruction with focused assessment of the priority standards. This new approach emphasizes depth over breadth.

The following excerpt is from the template of an academic achievement report used to explain the need to prioritize standards and make the information accessible to parents (Artifact, retrieved July 10, 2018):

> Standards play a main role or a supporting role. Here is how we can tell the difference.
> **Priority Standards** are "a carefully selected subset of the total list of the grade-specific and course-specific standards within each content area that students must know and be able to do by the end of each school year in order to be prepared for the standards at the next grade level or course. Priority standards represent the assured student competencies that each teacher needs to help every student learn, and demonstrate proficiency in, by the end of the current grade or course" (Ainsworth, 2013, p. xv).
> **Supporting Standards** are "those standards that support, connect to, or enhance the Priority Standards. They are taught within the context of the Priority Standards, but do not receive the same degree of instruction and assessment emphasis as do the Priority Standards. The supporting standards often become the instructional scaffolds to help students understand and attain the more rigorous and comprehensive Priority Standards" (Ainsworth, 2013, p. xv).
> The prioritization process is based on the following criteria.
> **Endurance** (lasting beyond one grade or course; concepts and skills needed in life). Will proficiency of this standard provide students with the knowledge and skills that will be of value beyond the present? For example, proficiency in reading informational texts and being able to write effectively for a variety of purposes will endure throughout a student's academic career and work life.
> **Leverage** (crossover application within the content area and to other content areas, i.e., interdisciplinary connections). For example, proficiency in creating and interpreting graphs, diagrams, and charts and then being able to make accurate inferences from them will help students in math, science, social studies, language arts, and other areas. The ability to write an analytical summary or a persuasive essay will similarly help students in any academic discipline.
> **Readiness for the next level of learning** (prerequisite concepts and skills students need to enter a new grade level or course of study). Will proficiency of this standard provide students with the essential knowledge and skills that are necessary for future success?
> **External Exams:** the concepts and skills that students are most likely to encounter on annual standardized tests, college entrance exams, and occupational competency exams students will need to prepare for (Ainsworth, 2013, pp. 25–27).

Using the priority standards adopted by the district, the staff who worked within the inclusion programs created assessment and grading plans for students with disabilities. These plans considered each student's unique needs, modes of access, and planned volume of work appropriate to complete in each subject. The staff discussed these plans with parents and, with parents' consent, made them part of the IEP document. To develop these plans, general education teachers and

special education teachers engaged in collaborative team meetings to create the work output and a grading process that would allow the general education teacher to know the student had mastered the necessary concepts and standards. As a participant in these meetings, I co-authored plans for multiple students within the programs. Following is an interview excerpt wherein a special education teacher outlined how she collaborated with the general education teacher to create these supports for students and the impact it had on all students.

> My general education teacher-partner had all his material organized on his Google Drive. He gave me full access and told me the year at a glance—what his goals were for student learning. We were able to sit down and look at the goal for the year, what students needed to produce for me to determine they had adequately met the standards and then determine what kinds of work they should produce. I was able to take my knowledge on UDL and discuss what options we could provide to engage and represent the learning. Then, I spent some time in his [general education teacher's] classroom understanding how he taught. This was very helpful because I was able to see all the great things he already did and then just made suggestions on all my students' needs.
>
> Once we got into a few weeks of school and we had met multiple times, we were able to figure out how to create these assessment plans. First, we unpacked the standards, looked at each priority standard, and said what is it the students need to show me. Then we looked at redundancies and removed all the busy work. Once we did that, it was really easy to say how students will learn all the material and demonstrate their understanding. We clarified the goals of learning. For example, my general education teacher had an essay prompt: Students will write an essay to demonstrate their understanding of the Mayan civilization. The discussion we had was [about whether] they need to write an essay to show their understanding of the Mayan civilization. Can they not make a poster, a video, a podcast, etcetera? This was eye opening for my general education partner. I also told him, "It's not that I don't want the kids to learn how to write an essay, but let's build up to that." Once we had this discussion, it was super easy to come up with assessment plans because then we started playing to the strengths of the students. Once we played to their strengths, we were not looking at our kids from the deficit orientation: "Oh, they cannot write; they cannot read, etcetera." We provided universal access tools—embedded them in every lesson—so it was not like you needed a screen reader because you cannot read. [Instead,] anyone could use a screen reader. Also, it was not like these students cannot write an essay—there were options provided. If you wanted to write an essay, you could. Or, you could make a model or a poster or anything, really, to show you learned the material. I have to say this was truly eye opening. The best text message I got from my general education teacher was . . . that when he made these kinds of changes to the way he taught, many more of his typical students participated even better and reported loving the new way he was doing assessments. I think that was a win! (Interview, special education teacher, January 11, 2019)

This interview was a powerful example of not only the process involved in increasing meaningful participation, but also how the deficit orientation around students with disabilities can be shifted. In this interview excerpt, the special education teacher unpacked the overall instructional decision-making process many teachers used within these inclusive programs. She talked about clarifying the goal of teaching and learning. Her example made clear her team's

thinking on the issue: If the goal of the standard was to understand the Mayan civilization, then the students could demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways. She established the difference between a process goal (e.g., writing an essay) and a content goal (i.e., gaining understanding about the Mayans). By doing so, she and her teaching partner removed barriers that are typically erected in the classroom.

When teachers gave students only one way to show they learned a concept, they were privileging those students who may be good at that specific skill or process. That did not mean the rest of the students did not understand what was being taught; it meant the way the teacher decided to elicit their understanding was not their strength. However, when a student could not demonstrate understanding in the way the teacher spelled it out, it became a strike against the student, who was then deemed as not having understood the concept. Once the next unit of study came around—and the teacher again required an essay—then that became strike number two on another concept the student "did not understand." In this manner, the student's deficits were written up. A picture would emerge, showing that the student was not learning and may need the services of special education. Instead, by clarifying the lesson goals and providing multiple options, the teachers in this example put the UDL framework into practice.

Another important aspect the special education teacher spoke about was "removing redundancies." In most learning environments, much assigned work is meant to keep the students busy. When teachers plan and remove these redundancies, they address one of the deepest barriers for students with disabilities, especially those with significant needs—that of time. Reducing the volume of work and not marking down students for not completing "busy work" allowed students the extra time they needed to focus on tasks that were meaningful towards their learning. A parent of a student with autism reported how much it helped her child when the volume of work was reduced.

> This was a game changer for Usha. Usha has multiple therapies every day after school. Then we come back and do homework, which really seems like busy work. The previous teacher would mark her down for not doing it and kept insisting that [Usha] would not be learning if she did not complete every single piece of paper that was handed out. But this year, I insisted at the IEP that we need to prioritize. I read about the priority standards, and I was shocked that I had not been told about it before. Suddenly this year, it feels like we have time back in our hands. Also, I insisted that they follow this at school. Usha sometimes needs sensory breaks and, if she missed something, then she was constantly playing catch up. Instead, I was like, "Determine what is really important for every unit, not random decisions. Have her do that. Otherwise, you are penalizing her for being disabled." It is like a double whammy. It is like saying, "Oh, you have issues. Never mind, we are going to make it harder for you." This is exactly how kids get sent out of general education and into these SDC classes. (Interview, parent, February 1, 2019)

In this quote, the parent confirmed the earlier analysis of receiving "time back in our hands," as though it were a tangible reward. Many parents in this study expressed the feeling that their students were constantly playing "catch up." Additionally, this parent perceived that disabled students had to work harder than others to establish their worthiness to stay in general education. This is an ideological barrier detailed later in this chapter. In summary, these inclusion programs effectively incorporated volume reduction and prioritization of standards studied in each subject to afford disabled students the opportunity to participate alongside their peers.

Another tool used within these inclusive programs to promote participation was the participation plan. Participation plans are living documents—that is, they are always subject to change and grow along with the child's needs and context. These plans are especially useful when a student has multiple specialists, and the knowledge and consultations the different therapists provide must be integrated seamlessly while at school. Typically, participation plans were developed in collaborative team meetings. They broke down the student's day into blocks and addressed what was done during each block. Assistive technology tools needed, strategies that could be utilized, and descriptions of how the student would participate were specified. With the detailed narratives provided in these plans, general education teachers, students, and families were fully supported. These plans are especially suitable for students with complex communication needs and those who used AAC devices.

Following is a quote from a paraeducator, Jackie, who worked with a student with a complex communication need. Jackie outlined how much it eased her anxiety when she was given the opportunity to collaborate and develop this plan for her student. She talked about the frustrations she experienced when she was working at another site with another student and did not get a level of support similar to that afforded by this participation plan.

> When I started this job, the special education teacher handed me a folder with the participation plan. It spelled out for me exactly what I needed to do, what my student would do, and the tools needed. This was such a breath of fresh air. I had worked with this other kid at Holly Lane School, and no one told me what to do. The kid had a physical therapist, speech teacher, occupational therapist, special education teacher—and no one knew how to implement it all together. So I was always asking questions [but] never getting answers. But here, it was all laid out for me. I felt that my student was able to participate better because of that. Otherwise, in the general education classroom, if I had to figure it out when the teacher laid out the activity, she [the student] would maybe start doing it after 20 minutes, whereas all her classmates will be ahead. How is that fair? Just because she is disabled, she has to wait? That is harder for her, right? Whereas with a participation plan, it is all laid out, integrated. I can actually do my job of supporting my student. I can't tell you how good that feels to be able to do what you have been hired to do and make it work well for my student. And I have been part of developing this plan, so I can exactly ask for all the help I need because I am the one with the student all day, every day. (Focus group, paraeducators, March 21, 2018)

As Jackie expressed in this quote, participation plans allowed students to participate effectively and not lose access because an adult is helping to put the pieces together. Especially for students with complex needs, where physical and communication access and participation were difficult and required planning, these sorts of plans were imperative. Otherwise, the responsibility and blame were placed on the students' shoulder—that they were unable to meet the requirements—when, in reality, it was the context that failed them.

Barriers to Participation

Assessment and grading practices, as well as educational settings, surfaced in the data as examples of ideological and policy barriers to participation.

Theme #5: Assessment and Grading Practices as Exclusionary Tools Can "Prove" the Disabled Child's Inability to Merit Membership and Create Insurmountable Barriers

Assessment and grading practices can create barriers that may eventually become insurmountable. To illustrate, some teachers used criteria that were nonacademic and susceptible to bias to evaluate students. In an interview with a teacher who used "effort" as a grading criterion, I asked how she graded it and what her rationale was for using it as a metric. She responded, "I grade effort from unsatisfactory effort to excellent effort. I just know when kids have been putting in good effort, and I give them the grade. It is really easy for me to see (Interview, teacher, April 3, 2019). In this quote, the teacher demonstrated that her definition of "effort" was nonexistent; she articulated that she "just knows" when students put in the effort. She probably applied a culturally narrow definition of what effort looked like, which could be especially problematic for students of color and students who are disabled. In a previous section, the student Usha needed her work-volume requirements reduced. Could that instead be interpreted as "being lazy" and hence putting in minimal effort? The scale that the teacher described (unsatisfactory to excellent) appeared to be a linear summative scale. These sorts of grading practices are policy barriers and ideological barriers that are unnecessary obstacles and prevent authentic participation in classrooms.

Some grading practices created collateral effects that may be unintended. For example, many teachers—some of whom were part of the inclusive programs—awarded points for completed homework. According to many of these teachers, homework was meant to reinforce what was taught. The teachers awarded points for completion and either did not accept late work or reduced awarded points for every day the work was late. By incentivizing students to complete work at any cost, they disincentivized learning while marginalizing students with disabilities who may have needed additional time, as reflected in the following fieldnote:

> I am typing this note on my phone as I walk out of a very bizarre conversation. I spoke to Melanie about not docking points for Henry for submitting the homework late. I explained that it takes him a lot longer to complete the work because he attends multiple afterschool therapies almost every day. Parents would like to keep family dinner and bedtime sacred because that is his downtime. But Melanie told me that she is trying to teach real-world skills of staying on task and completing things. She said, "Maybe he needs to learn to plan his evening better." I am not sure how this is a real-world skill. I am going to have to put it in his IEP to ensure he is not penalized for needing additional time. Feels like an impossible race, and a race to where? (Fieldnote, September 22, 2019)

According to Henry's parent report, this caused additional stress because Henry was a perfectionist and became greatly upset when his points were deducted. He started staying up late to complete the work or copied the work from other classmates, which are behaviors most teachers never want to encourage.

Assessment practices were also obstacles to participation in the general education curriculum. Many teachers had very narrow definitions of what constituted "acceptable" work products. They expected all students to be able to conform to what they determined to be work output worthy of a grade. For example, Maya wrote in a manner markedly different from any other student because she used an eye-gaze communication device. Because she took longer to compose a response, time became one of the deepest barriers for her. Expectations that she would need to

(and be able to) complete as much work as her classmates was unreasonable. Nevertheless, some teachers throughout her school career questioned her ability to be included because of the unconventional means with which she responded. The following fieldnote captured her mother's sentiment on this topic:

> Maya's mother and I were having a conversation today about perceptions teachers had, especially as it related to grading and assessment. Maya's mother said, "People have expectations of my child, but nothing they will change or do differently." She was frustrated that teachers have such narrow perceptions of what constituted work worth a grade and that they expected Maya to complete all assignments, some of which seemed irrelevant or unnecessary. (Fieldnote, October 22, 2018)

Maya demonstrated her understanding of her learning in multiple ways, as was evident to many teachers who had taught her. However, some teachers in her school career had questioned her work as not being authentic because she was nonverbal. Maya used multiple modalities to communicate: gestures, proxemics, her speech generating device, and vocalizations. When working with students who use AAC devices, *forced choice* is often a method used to elicit answers. This is quick and easy and allows timely participation in discussions in classroom and social contexts. In this method of obtaining responses, the AAC user is presented with options written on a white board or eye-gaze board and makes a choice. The option, "What I want to say is not on the board," is always provided. However, to create these boards, their communication partner (in this case, the teacher or paraeducator) writes the choices according to the context, activity, and so forth. The following fieldnote demonstrates one teacher's thinking on this method of eliciting responses, and my subsequent reaction:

> "All I see is the paraeducator writing on the whiteboard and the child choosing. How do I know that is her thoughts? She has to say it using her talker." This [teacher's comment in] my conversation today with one of the teachers left me in tears. I wondered what she had understood of the student. I am crying as I write this fieldnote. We talked so much and so often about how this student communicates. [The student] uses multiple modes. For an AAC user, when we expect and place pressure on them to use their talker, the apraxia in this student's case kicks in. (Apraxia kicks in when the child most wants to do or say something. Her mind wants to, but her body does not cooperate—that is apraxia.) How is this fair? (Fieldnote, October 29, 2018)

This fieldnote highlights the ideology at play. The teacher was privileging communication generated solely through the talker as belonging to the speaker. She did not acknowledge the multiple modes of communication that are central to the way everyone communicates. The teacher indicated that when the student made a choice from an eye-gaze board, the teacher doubted the choice represented "her thoughts" and hence did not indicate the student's ability. For this student to participate in a timely manner, choosing from a whiteboard was essential. It was not feasible to expect an AAC user to use only one way of communicating and then require that modality to be the one that created the highest physical and cognitive demands. By questioning the validity of the student's mode of participation, this teacher discounted her membership in the classroom.

This is an example of an ideological barrier that can eventually box students out of the general education classroom. Interrogating the validity of answers the students gave during discussions or tests can lead to questioning the appropriateness of their placement in the general

education classroom. This is how the process of segregating students with disabilities begins in schools. It does not happen at one IEP meeting. It is a culmination of small instances such as these that begin to blossom and firmly plant the belief that the child is either incapable of working alongside typical peers or would be better off in smaller settings. This is why parents had to invest the time to advocate, arm themselves with knowledge, and engage in learning about the educational system—although that usually is not their primary profession.

Theme #6: Educational Settings Such as General Education Classrooms Are Linked With Normative Expectations

The IDEA (2004) requires special education supports and services be provided in the LRE context. On a continuum, the general education classroom is the least restrictive of all options. The law intended special education as a service that can be provided in any setting, but that setting should be the one best for the child. Yet, the law can also be subverted within the social and cultural context. More than a particularized set of rights, the IDEA consists of procedural safeguards that govern the relationship between the school and the families (Engel, 1991). In other words, because the law did not actually specify the setting, and interpretation of the law is based on cultural aspects of the relationships between schools and parents, the law can be interpreted in varied ways. It was common for accommodations, such as, "Test will be read out loud to students" or "Tests can be taken in a quiet setting and most appropriate time of day," to be written in the IEP. However, these same accommodations—which were meant to facilitate optimal participation—were sometimes used as mechanisms to discriminate and segregate, as illustrated in the following fieldnote. A teacher, Ria, and I were discussing the needs of Zach, a student on her caseload for whom I was a service provider. The teacher alluded to the student having *many* accommodations on his IEP. I was surprised: If the student did not have needs that warranted accommodations, then he would not need an IEP. The teacher then explained that given how many accommodations the student had, he may be better served in a smaller segregated classroom where everyone received those accommodations.

> This meeting left me puzzled. Ria basically told me that because Zach needed the test read out and to take it in a quiet environment, he was better off in an SDC where they do that anyway. Is general education a good fit? Maybe SDC [would be] better? I reiterated that looking at our practice through the UDL lens is important. This will help us see that these are not even accommodations but proactive design elements that we as teachers can incorporate. She told me, "UDL has not arrived yet in our school, so we can't do all those accommodations in general education classrooms. How is it fair to other kids that he [Zach] gets accommodations?" This was one of the instances when I was left speechless. (Fieldnote, December 10, 2019)

In this fieldnote, Ria made visible the thought process many others expressed. She questioned why Zach needed to be in a general education setting given his need for accommodations. To provide context, the accommodations listed for Zach were considered very minimal. However, what Ria articulated, in essence, was that general education classrooms required students to behave within certain norms. If they were outside of those norms, then SDC may be a better fit. From this teacher's perspective, to merit a spot in a general education classroom, the student should not need the tests read out or need additional time or a specific time of day to complete the test. Needing those accommodations made Zach seem "less than" the other

students, and the teacher questioned the fairness of those practices relative to his peers who did not receive such accommodations. This provided another example of institutional settings being linked to normative expectations, which can raise ideological barriers that inhibit membership for students with disabilities.

As these inclusion programs began to expand and grow to other schools, pathologizing narratives began to emerge about the disabled creating roadblocks to their entry into general education classrooms. Teachers and administrators always considered "behavior problems" a major issue. Placing students with behavior problems (aggressive, noncompliant behaviors) in general education classrooms—even within these inclusive programs—was met with resistance. In a focus group discussion, a general education teacher who had one such student articulated why she thought students with behavioral challenges should not be included and why she felt it was important to select who could be included:

> When kids have behavior issues, they should not be in general education. It is better for them to go to an SDC and get their behavior problems worked on so that they don't have any anymore and then they can come back to general education. I mean, I want my kids to be successful. When they are noncompliant, they cannot be successful in general education, because we have to teach, and it is not possible to do that when we are dealing with behavior problems. I mean, I don't want him to grow up and remember that he was that kid in kindergarten who was running around, and the teacher was always having to be with him, correcting him. I don't want that for him. That is why I recommend he be moved to SDC. We want him back, but not until his behavior problems have been fixed. (Focus group, general education teachers, June 4, 2018)

In this focus-group transcript, the teacher revealed her apprehensions about having a child with behavior differences in her general education classroom even with the support of a special education teacher and other staff, such as paraeducators, within her classroom. She considered this student with aggressive behavior to be too disabled to be included and as someone who needed to fix his behaviors before being allowed reentry into the general education setting.

Although it may appear that this teacher needed to change her mindset about who can be included, this mindset is partly due to her teaching within the dual bureaucracies of general and special education that currently exist. This system is not fully inclusive. What is being excavated here in the voice of one participant is the dominant meta-narrative about disability within the education system. With the continued push for mainstreaming, education was reimagined after the passage of PL 94-142 and the reauthorization of IDEA. However, there is an organizational problem in the field of education that needs recognition: Labor is divided in schools based on occupation. Hence, anything related to children with disabilities rests with the Department of Special Education (Skrtic, 1995).

In the case of the student and teacher discussed here—and given that the district had other segregated settings as options for placement—the teacher felt that the student would benefit from a segregated program to fix his behavior before returning to mainstream settings. This notion is rooted in the underlying assumption that the disabled can be fixed in a vacuum (segregated classrooms) wherein the sole goal is to hold students and work on their problems until they are ready to be released into the mainstream. The language I used to describe these underlying assumptions may sound harsh. However, many educators espouse the belief that special education is a profession set up to help children with disabilities and that, as Bogdan and Kugelmass (1984)

theorized, (a) disability is a condition in individuals, (b) there are differences between "normal" individuals and the disabled, and (c) special education was conceived to assist children with disabilities. These assumptions take the onus away from the environment and context and place the blame squarely on the child who is displaying noncompliance with the set norms. Thus, these assumptions amount to barriers to inclusive education. If the student were engaged in a manner conducive to his learning, provided materials and forms of representation that met his unique style, and allowed to express his understanding in more than the one way an adult dictated, then he may not have been viewed as disruptive or noncompliant (CAST, 2018b). Whereas *impairment* may have a neurological or biological basis, the *disability* results from barriers society erects.

Discussion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how parental advocacy can help build participatory structures for inclusive education. I analyzed how Maya and her mother co-constructed what Maya presented at an IEP meeting to demonstrate that she was a young girl ensconced in a social network—like any other student—and was not a sum of her "deficits." This was especially important because the IEP is a legal document that provides services and supports based on the student's needs. To arrive at those needs, the team took a deficit-ridden approach, in which every aspect of the student's weaknesses was discussed and placed front and center.

In the first part of this chapter, I presented how progress-monitoring assessments and creation of fluid and flexible groupings for interventions promoted effective participation of students with disabilities. These methods reduce the stigma associated with traditional intervention structures that target only disabled students as being in need of assistance. I also examined adaptation frameworks, volume reduction mechanisms, and prioritization of standards as means to increase participation in general education classrooms. I displayed how teams used volume reduction and prioritization of standards to make participation feasible and meaningful. An important factor that was excavated was the notion of time being gained by using these practices because redundancies and "busy work" are eliminated, and students can focus on the information that is most essential. Last, I addressed participation plans as a tool to facilitate meaningful membership for students with complex communication needs.

In the second section, I explored barriers to participation and membership. Alongside the programmatic structures and mechanisms for access are barriers that prevent participation. It is imperative to recognize these obstacles; removing them requires an understanding of the complexities at hand. The barriers addressed herein are primarily ideological and policy-related hindrances to inclusion.

In examining barriers to participation, I considered grading practices and how evaluating subjective criteria such as "effort" can be susceptible to narrow culturally biased definitions that marginalize students of color and those with disabilities. I also uncovered how practices such as awarding points for completed homework can instigate behaviors that may be unintended. Through Maya's and Zach's examples, I illuminated how institutional settings can be linked to normative expectations. In an example of disabled youth being denied the opportunity to be knowledge generators, Maya's teacher questioned the validity of her strategy—one advocated by AAC users, specialists, and researchers—as not "her own thoughts." I further explored how these sorts of ideologies lead to marginalizing and exclusionary practices.

Chapter 5: Undergirding Inclusive Practices With Robust Supports: A Delicate Process

Building and sustaining inclusive practices is work that can never be completed. It is an ongoing cyclical process with no finish line. Within the school system, building inclusive practices is a design undertaking that warrants careful thought and constant maintenance. This is especially true because every individual's needs are unique, and the solutions we create today cannot universally support every student who will walk through those doors physically or virtually. Through the process of building and sustaining inclusion, scholars and educators have discovered that it is an undertaking that requires care and attention, the cornerstone of which is embedded in how we work and create solutions: the supports.

Similar to Chapters 3 (Access) and 4 (Participation), this chapter uncovers the processes, strategies, structures, and personnel that enable the undergirding of a strong, sustainable, and inclusive system. At the same time, barriers erected and enacted intentionally or unintentionally can tear down or mitigate any work carried out towards inclusivity. In this chapter, I make visible the ableist discourses and practices that sometimes frame the construction of disability and what it means to teach or parent a child with a disability within those confines. While conducting this analysis, I explored various phenomena as they occurred in classrooms, at staff-only meetings, and at meetings where parents were involved. I investigated perceptions expressed by parents of their continued struggle to create a robust set of supports that ensure their children not only were allowed physical access to the general education classroom but also derived a meaningful education that was free and appropriate to their unique needs. In doing so, I highlighted the social, economic, and cultural capital that parents expended to negotiate their children's educational privileges and problematize the system that affords this right to those with certain socioeconomic or cultural statuses.

Theme #1: Staff Members Enact Support Structures as an Active Community of Practice

In this section, I present data excerpts, primarily fieldnotes from various meetings, in which the participants acknowledged—or, by virtue of their conversations, showed—how valuable building a community of practice was. Although most of these meetings were among school-district staff members, some included parents. Teams (including parents) met at least six to seven times every academic year to address the three or four students who had complex communication needs. The first meeting excerpt is from a year-end discussion among a group of four teachers who had worked together for a year to implement inclusive practices at a school site where no such program had previously been implemented.

Although I am a part of this group, in the weekly meeting from which this note was excerpted, I was an observer and stayed in the background. These meetings took place during the school staff's allocated common preparatory time. We typically discussed the upcoming week's lessons in the four content-area classes (English, History, Science, and Mathematics) and planned necessary adaptations to content material, quizzes, tests, and so forth. All four individuals at the meeting were special education teachers. Hence, we did not decide the content to be taught but each of us would discuss content with the general education teachers in separate meetings. Instead, we planned which adaptations were needed for the students with disabilities who were fully included and how to implement those adaptations to allow the students to meaningfully participate and receive passing grades. This meeting had been called so we could reflect on the current year, identify which practices and structures had worked well, and make preliminary plans for the

following year. Notably, by the date of this meeting (June 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic had hit, and all educational settings had become virtual. In the first part of the following transcript, Ms. Summer—who had been one of the most vocal supporters of inclusion—was indignant and upset at an anecdote I had shared about a teacher (outside of this group) who asked why this initiative to build inclusive practices was given prime importance.

> *Ms. Summer:* I think it is very important. Wait, it is not about important, but really it is a civil right for them to receive their education in GE [general education] classrooms. So, it should not even be a question. I think it is of great benefit for all children to learn together. There is not a special ed world. We all live together and work together and so all kids should be doing that in school. They are an invaluable member of their classroom and contributing members of society. By learning together, everyone experiences the variability that exists in the classrooms and in our society, and so it is really an invaluable experience for all kids. I think that's just life. There are some inherent challenges, like how [do] you make the learning accessible, how do you make the participation meaningful, those kinds of things. I feel like that is what this job is about—figuring out how to support the students.
>
> *Kevin:* We always want our students to be less dependent and more independent; some kids will need a high level of support. Everyone involved in inclusion sees the impact on students. People with disabilities need some level of support, especially those with significant needs, they are going to need some support, parents, friends, support providers, passersby sometimes. So without inclusion, regular people won't know how to interact with people with severe disabilities. Many of the GE kids, I think, learned a lot about how to support kids with pretty significant needs, physical, emotional, medical, maybe even. And I think it is the realization that, hey, we all have different needs—some more significant than others—but we are all people first. And, like she said, not all about what's wrong or what we are deficient in.
>
> *Larry:* The best part about this has been the working together with the four of us collaborating. I think that is a support structure that I did not imagine as a support structure but turned out to be the biggest support. Like our weekly meetings when we just talked and worked out different issues. When we exchanged ideas, took the work, and divided it amongst us. That was the best learning experience for me. And, while it was of immense value to my students, really, it was invaluable for me.
>
> *Ms. Summer:* So, we all had a common thing we were all thinking of all the time, you know, like including these students and making sure they were successful. Then we had many issues every week. Like, gosh, the stuff in the beginning was really hard. But we kept our Tuesday meetings and kept working through it. Now, when I look back, I am like, that is what helped us get through. (Focus group, June 13, 2020)

Within the world of segregated SDCs, there is an implicit understanding that disabled students will not benefit from what is taught to students in typical classrooms—that disabled children are not capable of understanding the depth of general education content knowledge. By proclaiming that there is no "special ed world," Ms. Summer implied that school districts are denying disabled students' agency to determine what they can and want to learn. Additionally, she questioned whether there was a metaphorical "special ed world" that disabled students enter from the SDC because the content and skills taught in these segregated classrooms can be very limiting.

Kevin, who typically worked with students who had the most significant disabilities, reiterated that disabled students having extensive support needs should not preclude them from being included. He argued that people live in an interdependent world, one where it is important for peers to know what kinds of support people with significant disabilities need—and one in which knowing how to provide assistance is part of authentic membership. As Ms. Summer noted, understanding that all people are different and that the variability that exists in our classrooms reflects the world at large is an important lesson for all students.

Although acknowledging that supports are an integral part of building inclusive practices, the point this focus group excerpt begins to unveil is the importance of building a *community of practice*. A community of practice is a group of people who have a common vision or mission and engage in collaborative inquiry in cooperating teams that meet regularly (Lave, 1991). The group relative to this meeting had engaged in that process throughout the school year, and its members acknowledged the immense value they found in working together in this fashion. They shared what Wenger (1998) delineated as the three basic elements of a community of practice: joint enterprise (domain), mutual engagement (community), and a shared repertoire. As apparent from this meeting transcript, the domain (inclusive education) inspired these community of practice members to consider the variability that existed in classrooms and to acknowledge how peers can contextualize and provide supports for students with significant needs, mirroring what could happen outside school in a community setting.

Because communities of practice develop as a result of what its members value, they reflect the participants' understanding of what is key: "No special ed world" insightfully expresses how members developed understandings and practices in response to external influences. Within the development stages of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), the group in this fieldnote would be considered active. They engaged in creating artifacts (e.g., weekly adaptations to curricula, assessment plans, adapted quizzes, and tests), met weekly, and communicated with each other to adapt to changing circumstances within the school and classrooms. My insider status as a participant in this group allowed me to witness and contend with challenges related to teachers questioning the validity of what we were doing for students with significant needs and whether the students would derive any benefit from being with their typically developing peers.

The following excerpt from an interview transcript features Nina (special education teacher) and Kayla (general education teacher) who co-taught a transitional kindergarten classroom. They were colleagues who chose to come together and requested to be allowed to co-teach. They did it informally for a year of their own accord. Then, the school district sanctioned their teamwork as effective and formalized their partnership.

> *Kayla:* Without Nina, I do not know how I would have done it.
> *Nina:* Well, I used to feel isolated, like my kids in an SDC. Then, when we started working together, it transformed my teaching.
> *Kayla*: I learned so much from Nina, things I would never or have never learned from graduate school or even from other GE [general education] teachers. This was the best. We sit down every week and plan for the next week, divide and conquer all the tasks. Then, we talk every day during recess [and] after school to tweak what we had planned.
> *Nina:* I can bounce ideas off, know what is relevant in the GE classroom, and make sure my kids are getting that too. And who decided that kids as young as mine should be in separate settings?

Kayla: Yeah. Everyone is learning how to be a student in our classroom, so everyone can learn together, right? Plus, having the paraeducators as part of our planning is amazing. These ladies have really transformed my teaching; I can never go back to just being in my own little kingdom. The para[educator]s—there's three of them—are part of our weekly preparation meetings. They have the best ideas because they are seeing first-hand what the kids are doing in the groups, you know. I mean, I don't know why it took us this long to get here. (Interview, teachers, May 29, 2018)

In this interview, the co-teachers outlined how they worked together, planned their instructional sequences, delegated work, and created artifacts they used in their practice, as well as the benefits they saw professionally and the positive effects of their partnership on the students. This is another example of a community of practice in the active phase. However, this one also included personnel (paraeducators) who were not at the same hierarchical level as teachers at the school. The teachers represented in this excerpt made visible their shared commitment that allowed them to function as a collective entity and helped them produce a shared repertoire of actions, vocabulary, and style of providing education that was their joint enterprise.

The next excerpt, a 49-second interaction during a planning meeting between Mrs. Ryan and Ms. C, demonstrates the teacher team's deep understanding for the way each other worked. They relied on each other to divide the work, create the artifacts, and plan for the week. They usually met for about 30 minutes every week but, in this excerpt, an unexpected schedule change had shortened that planning time to 49 seconds right before lunch. Typically, that would not have deterred them, but one of the two teachers had to leave for an off-campus appointment.

Mrs. Ryan: Unit 2, Week 1, next week?
Ms. C: Yep.
Mrs. Ryan: I'll prep the read-aloud, the center's activity, and the homework packet.
Ms. C: (nodding). Awesome. I'll prep the writing task, the Math manipulatives, and the sink-or-swim experiment.
Mrs. Ryan: Font size 24. Raised rule paper for Allie, OK?
Ms. C: Got that penciled in (smiling).
Both teachers fist bump each other.
End recording. (Fieldnote, planning meeting, April 29, 2018)

In 49 seconds, these teachers discussed what was most essential for the following week's instruction and divided the labor by voluntarily taking on the tasks. It is evident from the interaction that these two teachers had great familiarity with and deep knowledge of how they worked together. They displayed how people act when they have shared knowledge and goals related to contexts in which they carry out certain practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Although this may not be a true apprentice situation (i.e., in which one teacher mentors the other), the teachers engaged in a level of apprenticeship with each other, given that one was a general education teacher and the other was a special education teacher. To adequately serve all their students (disabled and typically developing), it was vital that they tap into each other's specialized knowledge.

At the time of this interaction, Mrs. Ryan and Ms. C had worked together for more than a year. Their planning meetings were guided by the content they needed to teach (determined by standards, curricula, etc., which were Ms. C's specialty as the general education teacher) and how and what supports all children needed to meaningfully participate and learn (Mrs. Ryan's specialty

as the special education teacher). The understanding between the teachers was revealed in their economy of words to describe and plan what they needed to achieve. As a participant observer, having watched these teachers interact over the course of the year, I noticed that they relied on each other for certain aspects of their craft. Mrs. Ryan clarified the content to be taught. Mrs. Ryan kept the knowledge of the support needs of each student front and center, articulating the accommodations for four of her students (font size 24) and the type of paper needed for one student (Allie). She also continually worked to determine which supports could become proactive design features in their instructional planning. Both teachers displayed strong affiliations as they discussed the cooperative actions in which they would engage to benefit the implementation of their craft. Mrs. Ryan set an action in motion: "I'll prep the . . ." She invited the hearer (Ms. C) to cooperate, which Ms. C did willingly (displayed by nodding her head). Additionally, Ms. C used a verbal evaluative response ("awesome") to convey her affiliation to the specific initiating action (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2012; Pomerantz, 2012).

One team created a consequential artifact used widely in discussions about inclusive practices, called "Levels of Support." The special education department classified students based on the severity of their disabilities as mild, moderate, or severe. Although this may appear to be useful information, it did not serve the purpose of building support structures for those students in general education classrooms. Instead, these classifications were used to decide in which type of SDC the child would be educated, and that determination of the student's disability level was sometimes arbitrary. Typically, students with intellectual disabilities were classified as having moderate-to-severe needs. Students with learning disabilities or speech and language impairments were considered to have mild-to-moderate needs. These classifications were based on norms—which correlated to what a typical student did in a particular grade level—and how far behind that norm the disabled student was. Thus, the classifications placed the onus for learning on the student, as though the disability resided in them.

The "Levels of Support" document (Table 2) was an attempt to flip that narrative. It portrayed the level of support and contextual factors that students with disabilities require to succeed within a general education setting. It assumed that children would be included—regardless of the severity of their disabilities—and placed the onus on the school teams to determine how to help the students succeed. It eliminated the question, "Can this student be included?" Instead, it centered the discourse around how the school could facilitate their success.

This "Levels of Support" document was retrieved as a work in progress, but it included elements on which the teacher team (Mrs. Ryan, Ms. C, Ms. Summer, Kevin, Larry, and I) were working. The items listed made clear that the focus was on which supports need to be in place for the students in their classrooms. The levels appeared to offer graduated supports and services, including specifics such as alternate response formats, assessments, and grading plans that outlined for the teachers which accommodations the students needed. For example, for students who needed Level 3 support, the team met at regular intervals and involved the families in planning adaptations and supports (Table 2). This collaborative approach proved successful for students with significant disabilities; it increased the children's social participation and educational progress. It also achieved the goal of including parents in the decision-making process for their children's education. The document was created by a community of practice as an artifact of their brainstorming and planning for inclusive education. It reflected what they intended to do for their students and how they wanted to engage with the families. It echoed the belief that parents' engagement is crucial. Research on parent involvement indicated that parents who are engaged in

collaborative activities with their children's educational teams have a greater impact on their children's academic outcomes (Mortier et al., 2012).

Table 2
Levels of Support (Artifact, Retrieved December 1, 2019)

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Consult Support from education specialist regarding strategies to engage student, represent info, and how student will demonstrate understanding	Consult + possible small-group intervention Strategic academic support in subject areas needed Progress monitoring to determine fluid and flexible grouping Small-group intervention determined based on need	Consult Intensive intervention in academic areas as determined by progress-monitoring tools Small-group or one-on-one intervention
Universal access tools Assessment changes minimal	Universal access tools Assessment plan in one or two subject areas, with some adaptations for district benchmark tests Classroom adaptations	Universal access tools Assessment plans may be needed in all subject areas Alternate response format Classroom adaptations in core content
Check in with students and general education teachers Social-emotional strategies if needed	Check in with student and family Social, emotional, and behavioral strategies	Frequent check-ins with student Team meeting with family to design support structures, additional adaptations, every 6 weeks Social-emotional strategies

Theme #2: Although School Staff and Parents Collaborate, Power Imbalances Remain

To successfully involve parents in schools, it is important to build rapport, communicate often, and systematically provide opportunities via special events that allow such participation (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Research evinced the need for this involvement to be more than just volunteering in the classroom; instead, it underscored that the focus should be on a partnership to provide appropriate educational experiences. Additional avenues for involvement include home visits (Scully & Howell, 2008), parent–teacher conferences, and annual IEP meetings. The question to be considered in these exchanges between school teams and administrators with parents

is whether the parents felt as though they were being heard. How effectively did teams listen to what parents want for their children?

With the following focus-group transcripts, I examine the manner in which listening was displayed and enacted during a multiparty meeting involving stakeholders, including special education teachers, general education teachers, school-site administrators, district-level administrators from the special education department, specialists such as school psychologists and speech language pathologists, and parents of children with disabilities. This meeting occurred as part of the stakeholders' annual evaluation of the inclusion program.

In the analysis, I embedded discourse analytic tools and situated this group interaction and conversation in their larger societal and political contexts. I also looked at how the different stakeholders' voices emerged in the interaction—how distinctive they were and how they came to be orchestrated. Further, I scrutinized how questions were answered and how agreements and alignments (or lack thereof) played out in this multiparty interaction. Schools tend to be establishments with numerous stakeholders who, although working towards a common goal of educating students, have different and sometimes conflicting views. Some of these stakeholders' differing agendas could lead to forming alliances against one other. It is important that stakeholders sitting around the table attentively listen to the perspectives, needs, and wants of all actors—and most importantly, those of the parents. Although the intent of this meeting was to collaborate—that is, to gain the parents' perspective and engage in a dialog with them—analysis of the fieldnote demonstrated that mini-power-plays were enacted, and some voices were subtly silenced.

In the following excerpt, Ms. Lou and Mrs. Ryan are special education teachers. Ms. Jacobs, Director of Special Education, and Mrs. John, a district-level administrator, were present, along with parents, Mr. Shah and Mr. Kumar. Eleven additional participants (parents, teachers, and staff) were also present but are not part of this excerpt. The meeting took place in a classroom at the school. The institutional nature of the meeting was palpable in the meeting's activity. In general, the discussion was goal oriented and started as soon as all participants arrived. For the most part, Ms. Lou (special education teacher) and Mrs. John (district administrator) facilitated the meeting. Ms. Lou welcomed everyone and requested each participant share a positive they had observed about the program that year. Thus, she set the tone for turn-taking, requesting everyone participate and emphasizing that there was no set order to speak.

> *Mr. Shah:* First thing is class strength (questioning voice). So, basically, because kids come under this group, basically, they are extra. Basically, if you take my son's class, there are 32 members. All the other classes, there are 28 members; but in my son's class, because we are inclusion, there are more members. I am not trying to compare, but there are too many members in the class, you know.
> *Ms. Lou:* (nods in agreement) Mm huh (softly).
> *Mr. Shah:* So, we need to bring the numbers down to 28, you know, just like the other classes. I mean, these kids are having some issues, you know, and we are making their class strength bigger than [a] normal class. It is very hard on the teacher, you know. (Focus group, May 22, 2017)

Although there is asymmetry in the "feedback account" in which Mr. Shah engaged (i.e., he did not provide the positive feedback Ms. Lou had requested), Ms. Lou appeared to agree with him. She allowed him to hold the floor and keep speaking; she chose not to correct or ask that he comply with her original request. After Ms. Lou nodded in agreement and encouraged Mr. Shah

with softly spoken continuers, Mr. Shah shifted to "we." There was a noticeable shift in his footing and orientation. Until then, he had provided an evaluation of what he considered *problematic* with the program. He then shifted his footing from the person reporting the problem to one of a team player, signaled by his use of "we." This gestured his orientation towards figuring out a solution. By using "we," he made all participants relevant recipients. Also evident in the way he framed his telling in the beginning was that, in addition to pursuing his son's interests, he was speaking on behalf of the general student population:

> *Mrs. John:* (quickly intervenes) What do you feel has gone well, though we know what you are saying, that this is a concern, and what do you feel has been positive about the program and support for your son?
> *Mr. Shah:* Positive about the program in the sense he now [is] mixing with kids.
> *Mrs. John:* Mm huh mm huh
> *Mr. Shah:* He is looking, learning, and watching how other kids behave. I can definitely say, this I can say, is positive, actually.
> *Mrs. John:* Mm, OK. So, the exposure to the other students and the positive role model was good? Nice. (Focus group, May 22, 2017)

Mrs. John made an evaluation and characterized what Mr. Shah said as a concern. She operated at a meta level when she appraised what was said and chose to call it a "concern." She also marked his noncompliance with the original task (what Ms. Lou had invited the team to do) by using "though" retrospectively. In doing so, she cast Mr. Shah's response as inappropriate. By engaging in these actions, she constructed her role of authority and produced a very strong maneuver.

When the parent offered examples and instances of what his son was doing as a result of his membership in this program, Mrs. John backchanneled, using "Mm huh" with a prosodic intensity to signal her pleasure at what the parent was saying. When it appeared that Mr. Shah had completed his account and was providing an evaluation (saying, "This I can say is positive"), Mrs. John used the continuer "Mm OK" to signal her consent (using OK). She then recast what the parent said in more technical school jargon and applied it to all students. Mr. Shah had been focused on his own child; in reformulating his account, Mrs. John not only used more technical terms, but also abstracted from a singular and generalized to a population. At the end of that exchange, Mrs. John provided an evaluation ("Nice"), the use of which displayed her authority to provide such evaluations. By engaging in these actions that construct authority, she adopted the role of someone orchestrating people together to foster agreement and promote convergence into a vision:

> *Mrs. Ryan:* I agree, I agree. That is the most positive thing I have seen, more than the academics. I think I have seen kids grow so much socially. They have come out of their shells; they were so shy and quiet (soft whispering voice) and did not want to talk to other kids. Now they are fine playing on the playground (voice tone projecting confidence) now talking to everybody—kids who did not get those social cues but needed that experience and modeling from other kids, and they're totally different kids from what we saw last year.
> Ms. Lou, another teacher, and the paraeducator all nod yes and murmur agreement with Mrs. Ryan.

Mrs. John: So, the social. But I also heard that his child is part of the general ed class like all the other students. I heard that in what you were saying, as well.
Mr. Shah: Yes, actually, that is true. (Focus group, May 22, 2017)

By stepping in to agree with Mr. Shah, Mrs. Ryan validated his stance of the social growth he said he had seen in his son. Mrs. Ryan abstracted what he said in the singular—with his son—and applied it to other students in the program, as well. She emphasized the confidence the children developed in this program by using prosody of voice (shy and quiet in a soft whispering voice). Then she elevated the prosody and displayed confidence in her voice to indicate the students' change in social behaviors, emphasizing words such as "fine" and "play." Mrs. Ryan's colleagues and a paraeducator who reported to her aligned with her in agreement. In this way, the teachers in the group also aligned themselves with the parent, Mr. Shah, and validated what he said in the preceding excerpt. It appeared that the teacher group invoked a group alignment to mitigate and soften the perceived authoritarian move Mrs. John had made in calling out Mr. Shah for not complying with Ms. Lou's original request.

Mrs. John was building her stance as one who listened to both teachers and parents by recasting what was said. She used "I heard" twice, directing it once at Mrs. Ryan (rephrasing to Mrs. Ryan what she heard Mr. Shah say about his child), and once in her comment to Mr. Shah, authoritatively (via prosody and strategic positioning) confirming what she heard him say about his son. By doing so, she projected a persona who listened to both parties. By juxtaposing the voice of the teacher and the voice of the parent (directing "I heard" at both parties), she put both at a level below her own. It clearly emerged that she was playing this role of greater authority and responsibility and was orchestrating the event. Mr. Shah's use of the word, "actually," made his propositional attitude towards the sequence explicit; it mitigated the misalignment perceived when he did not align himself with Ms. Lou's original request—to provide positive feedback—that Mrs. John first indexed by using "though" retroactively.

The following excerpt from the same meeting shows Mrs. John's interaction with another parent:

Mr. Kumar: I would like to add that my daughter has also gone through the grades here in this model.
Mrs. John: Mm huh.
Mr. Kumar: So, I know the teachers here are very invested in the kids and in my daughter, as well.
Mrs. John: Mm mm.
Mr. Kumar: But what I thought is, in this model, even the kids have started to realize that she is a member of their room.
Mrs. John: Mm mm.
Mr. Kumar: When it started off initially in kindergarten, she was seen as a Room 5 kid, and the model slowly transformed from kindergarten to first grade to second grade, and she became more of a member, not just in the teacher's eyes, but with the students, as well.
Mrs. John: Students' eyes.
Mr. Kumar: So, that I see as the positive.
Mrs. John: Acceptance.
Mr. Kumar: Yes. (Focus group, May 27, 2017)

In this excerpt, the parent Mr. Kumar offered an evaluation of the program from his daughter's vantage and adopted an epistemic stance when using, "I know." Mrs. John backchannelled to form an alliance with Mr. Kumar and encourage him to elaborate on his experiences. The strategic positioning of her continuer—right after the parent claimed his daughter had gone through several grades here and, hence, he spoke from experience—indicated Mrs. John's alignment with Mr. Kumar. Additionally, Mr. Kumar made the effort to generalize, saying, "Teachers are invested in the kids." He then specifically talked about his daughter. The prosody of Mrs. John's voice also spoke to the validity of Mr. Kumar's statement, allowing him the right to take that stance. Mrs. John used continuers repeatedly, further encouraging Mr. Kumar to elaborate. She repeated his words ("Students' eyes"), agreed with him, and aligned herself with him in this manner. Then, in one word, she reformulated his telling as "acceptance," again asserting her authority as an administrator in her ability to listen to all perspectives and recast them for the group. In these ways, she constructed her role of listener and orchestrator of the discussion.

These excerpts shed light on the different ways listening was displayed in this multiparty discussion. The administrator effectively used conversational devices to orchestrate the discussion. She built her position as a listener able to abstract the essence of what one participant said and recast it in technical speak for the benefit of others. She used devices such as "I heard" to effect her position of authority above the teachers and the parents. By doing so, she moved the discussion forward and orchestrated the narrative in a manner that proved useful. Although it may not be directly visible from the excerpts shared herein, I can speak to the outcome of the meeting, having looked at the entire dataset, and from being a participant observer. That is, this meeting led to effective reflective discussions, and the group produced positive suggestions to move the program forward.

As alluded to earlier, I noticed a subtle variation in the way Mrs. John listened and responded to the two parents, Mr. Shah and Mr. Kumar. She did not hesitate to call out Mr. Shah's transgression; but when he complied, she encouraged him. In Mr. Kumar case's, she encouraged more of his telling from the beginning of the interaction. As a participant observer with intimate knowledge of both cases, I wondered whether Mr. Kumar's expertise about the school system and his extensive knowledge about his daughter's legal rights played into the differences in how Mrs. John responded to each parent. When Mr. Shah brought up the issue of "class strength" (referred to in this dissertation as membership in the roster), Mrs. John steered him from the topic. The school district was trying to avoid addressing that issue at the meeting. Given the presence of multiple parents, they did not want parents to band together to demand rostering of their children.

These excerpts revealed the subtle variations in alignment and misalignment when multiple interactional partners engage in a discussion in an institutional context with varying power differentials built in by virtue of positions and hierarchies. They also spotlighted how the different members of school teams listen to parents. Parents should be seen as a valuable resource, and their efforts to be strong advocates for their children appreciated. Partnerships with parents are important, much-needed components of effective programs for all children, especially for children with disabilities. In many cases, parents are the spokespersons for their children. Listening to and incorporating their views and needs are vital constituents and building blocks of successful school programs.

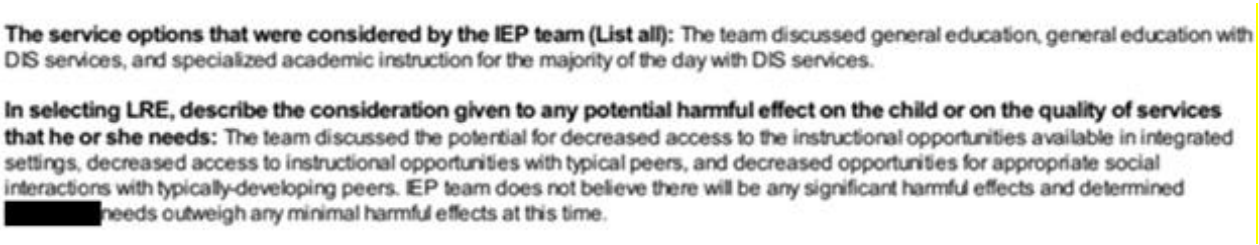
As evident in the following email excerpt, schools sometimes blatantly violate parent rights and thus lose the trust of the family they had set out to serve. In this example, Cameron was an autistic 4 1/2-year-old. He was classified as having a moderate-to-severe disability and placed in

the moderate–severe preschool classroom. His mother wanted to discuss inclusive kindergarten options for the upcoming school year. The team informed her that they would discuss placement for the next school year at a later date. However, the IEP document they handed to Cameron's mother demonstrated that the school staff had already determined Cameron's placement—a moderate-to-severe kindergarten classroom. The parent was devastated: Despite her request and the team's agreement to discuss options, the team had made a predetermination. The following email excerpt and screenshot show the parent's response to the violation of her procedural safeguards:

> At the beginning of the meeting, I was asked about my parent concerns. I mentioned that I would like to discuss general education inclusion options, and was told that we would discuss that a bit later when we came to that part in the IEP document. The following information shown in the screenshot was "drafted" before our IEP meeting. [Figure 4]

Figure 4

Screenshot of Cameron's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Included in Email From Parent



The service options that were considered by the IEP team (List all): The team discussed general education, general education with DIS services, and specialized academic instruction for the majority of the day with DIS services.

In selecting LRE, describe the consideration given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs: The team discussed the potential for decreased access to the instructional opportunities available in integrated settings, decreased access to instructional opportunities with typical peers, and decreased opportunities for appropriate social interactions with typically-developing peers. IEP team does not believe there will be any significant harmful effects and determined [redacted] needs outweigh any minimal harmful effects at this time.

> As a parent, I am a member of the IEP team. I'm concerned that I was not included in discussing recommended service options (specialized academic instruction in SDC) that were considered or any of the other options written above. I feel I was not allowed to have meaningful participation or provide input per the Procedural Safeguards, "You have the right to participate in IEP team meetings about the identification (eligibility), assessment, or educational placement of your child and other matters relating to your child's FAPE (20 USC 1414[d] [1]B–[d][1][D]; 34 CFR 300.321; EC 56341[b], 56343[c])." Nor did we have an actual discussion of the harmful effects on my child while deciding the least restrictive environment. I very much want to have this discussion but was asked to wait. We did not discuss the decreased access to instructional opportunities in integrated settings or the decreased access to interactions with typically developing peers in the recommended environment. Also, I would like to note that I shared my concern again about general education options when this recommendation was given. I was asked to table this part of the discussion by the administrator suggesting that it is too soon to discuss and include the transition plan for kindergarten as part of this IEP, yet, on the service page, it is written as Mod[erate]/Severe SDC through December of 2021 of next school year. We cannot table the discussion if those dates of services remain as they are in the IEP. I do not accept the placement as offered. I also can say with conviction, my parental input isn't going to change. (Artifact, email excerpt sent to school and district special education administrators, January 8, 2021)

The parent invoked her legal rights by quoting the law in her response to the documentation of Cameron's placement for the next year. She asked that this response stating her dissent be appended to the IEP document. Further, she pointed out that contrary to what was documented, the team did not discuss the harmful effects of a segregated placement or decreased access to general education curriculum and setting. Administrators explicitly asked this parent to table the discussion at the meeting and, without engaging in a discussion, wrote in the IEP that they had. Most poignantly, the mother's letter revealed the temporality of the discussion and its relevance and centrality to her as a parent. Unlike the other team members, the mother's concern for her son was not encapsulated in one academic year at a time. She always considered how any one event or series of events would affect his immediate and distant future:

> Waiting to provide my input doesn't seem prudent at this time. Sharing my concerns about my son's educational placement is based on years of academic research, not just my preferences. For Cameron, there are exponential harmful effects on his academic/social progress as he is a child with exceptional needs and a person of color. While distance learning has proved challenging for him, he continues to make academic gains and social progress. There is a body of research that shows a segregated classroom setting will make it less likely that Cameron will ever be meaningfully included in general education with his peers, especially if he starts kindergarten in an SDC and [as] a person of color. There are years of research that persons of color and students with disabilities who are marginalized in segregated settings have diminished outcomes for adult life. That is two strikes against Cameron before he even gets started in his academic career. The idea that starting kindergarten in a separate setting, away from the general education classroom, content, and typical peers, with fewer students who have more significant needs, no typical role models, and instruction at a slower pace will not benefit a child like Cameron in the long run. That has also been disproven by research. Those effects are not minimal and do not outweigh the harm of limiting his potential. I'm not willing to take that chance on my son's future. Special education services are just that, services. Specialized academic instruction is a service—not a placement. I'm open to discussions about service-related options that can occur within the context of the general education environment. If it is his social/emotional development or behavior that is the team's concern, then perhaps we can discuss adding behavior support services to his IEP or other options. If [it is] the ability to support Cameron's needs in GE class, a placement option that we could discuss is the kindergarten class at West Valley Elementary. It is the district's most experienced general education kindergarten with special education supports embedded. It also has an experienced GE and SE staff with the know-how and mindset to successfully include students with significant needs. (Artifact, email excerpt sent to school and district special education administrators, January 8, 2021)

Cameron's mother may be a busy parent who may not have time to invest in advocacy for her child. Nevertheless, she revoiced the professional literature to construct a position of authority and knowledge. By surfacing the multiple ways society could marginalize Cameron, she exposed the team for violating the law by predetermining where he would be educated. She revealed her deep understanding of the law by asking the team to consider services to support her son's socioemotional needs, rather than using that as the reason for a segregated setting. By stating that specialized services are just that—*services* and not placement—she stipulated the letter of the law

to help her persuade the team of her child's rights. By stating, "Those effects are not minimal and do not outweigh the harm," she made clear her disagreement. By documenting her views and asking that they be appended to the IEP, she ensured the evidence of past violations would be clear and visible should the state conduct an audit or should she later file a complaint for another transgression.

This situation is another example of power imbalances that exist within the IEP process. The law mandates that parents and school teams engage collaboratively to build the IEP (Engel, 1991). Nevertheless, some school teams marginalize the parents' voices and insert into the IEPs what they (school) deem appropriate. Authorship of the IEP is meant to be collaborative, but only the school-related professionals have access to enter the information. This can eliminate the parents' voices—unless the parents are familiar with procedural safeguards that protect their rights.

Another example of this theme surfaced in the data related to how schools used established institutional practices to frame arguments justifying their predeterminations that a child was too disabled to be included. At many IEP meetings, team meetings, and staff discussions, the issue of grading and assessment became a mechanism to exclude students with disabilities. That is, teachers create tests, quizzes, and other assessments to test the students' knowledge, but many students, including some with disabilities, are not proficient test-takers and may exhibit test anxiety. Statistics from the American Test Anxieties Association (n.d.) revealed that 16% to 20% of North American students reported high test anxiety, and another 18% reported moderate test anxiety. Combining these statistics, 38% of students experience some form of test anxiety. Nevertheless, tests were one of the most common ways the school district used to assess students' academic performance and to determine a disabled child's "fit" for general education.

At many IEP meetings, discussions centered around practices that incorporated the UDL principle of multiple means of action and expression, which calls for students to be offered a variety of ways to demonstrate mastery of concepts. The following interview excerpt shows a general education teacher's response to grading and assessment practices in general education settings. When the special education teacher expressed that the student had a learning disability compounded by test anxiety, the general education teacher shrugged and said that general education was then perhaps not the best setting for this student. She firmly believed that students needed to either take the test assigned or fail the class—with no options between test-taking and failing.

> If the student cannot come up with a coherent written answer about the Science content I am teaching, then they did not meet the standard. Simple. That is a failing grade. The entire department does it this way. If I give a student a different type of test, then it is a modification and no more standards-based learning. That is not fair to the rest of them who are doing the test. That kid is probably better off in an SDC. They can do all that there. In my class, it is rigorous, and I have to teach and assess this way only. (Interview, October 22, 2019)

The general education teacher's position seemed to be a recurring feature of many discussions in which I was a participant observer. The frameworks of UDL and MTSS are not new in the American educational system; nor was the idea that the special education teacher presented to the general education teacher—using multiple ways to assess learning—new or revolutionary. Of note is the general education teacher's utilization of established department practices to defend her choice of testing methods and her implication that it would be unfair to the other students.

Importantly, however, the suggestion the special education teacher offered—using multiple-choice instead of essay questions—is not considered a *modification* if the multiple-choice questions address the same content. That is, the multiple-choice question format is an *alternate* (not modified) response format, one which the IEP team could agree was a needed accommodation. Nevertheless, the general education teacher effectively said that an alternate response format would not accurately describe the student's academic achievement in all its complexity, struggle, and uniqueness. Hence, the student needed to be placed in a segregated classroom.

The other established institutional practice invoked in this interview transcript was availability of the SDC classrooms to which students with disabilities who struggle academically are sent. The need for accommodation in testing and the ready availability of a segregated setting were used to argue that the child was "too disabled" to remain in general education. These narratives are frequently espoused and used to segregate students. By being unwilling to look beyond accepted practices, they hinder progress.

Theme #3: Contractual Stipulations, Legal Mandates, and an Uneasy Memorandum of Understanding Support Vital Inclusive Education Structures (Collaboration Time, Training, and Consult Opportunities)

Having spearheaded the development of inclusive programs at this district, I witnessed the inception and growth of these communities of practice as they renegotiated what inclusion meant to each of them at the various school sites. The development of these communities of practice with no real oversight—but with just some allocated funds to compensate teachers for their time and effort—was negotiated within the teachers' union in a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Typically, teachers are provided compensation for additional meetings on an as-needed basis (as determined or approved by an administrator). However, in the particular case of these communities of practice related to inclusion, the NEUSD Director of Special Education, Ms. Jacobs, put compensation in place. Ms. Jacobs wanted the teachers to know that she and her team recognized and valued the work the teachers did. When discussions regarding how to implement this inclusion program began at the school district, the director put forth the idea that it would be important to provide time for collaboration and consultation for the participating teachers. She initiated development of a simple MOU that would document availability of the time, lay out general understandings about how the students would be supported, and delineate the teachers' responsibilities. At its inception, this was a simple one-page MOU, an excerpt of which follows:

> All provisions of Article 36.5 shall be in effect, including but not limited to:
> a. Training as related to addressing the needs of fully included students shall be provided on an as-needed basis.
> b. Release time or paid time, at the hourly rate as indicated on Appendix A, shall be provided for such training.
> c. Participants in the Learning Center shall be given paid time, at the hourly rate on Appendix A, for collaborating outside the workday on student needs, program development, and other topics as needed. (Artifact, excerpt from draft MOU between school district and teachers' union)

Nowhere in this MOU did it say that the teachers *should* form a community of practice. However, as evident from the following fieldnote, the director stated in a meeting with me that she wanted to provide some compensation for the additional time these teachers invested. Ms. Jacobs

and I met frequently in her office to plan for these programs each year. I wrote this fieldnote right after one of our meetings. It captured our conversation regarding providing grounds for these communities to grow.

> Ms. Jacobs and I were seated at the small conference table in her office, working out details of the MOU. She was very clear that she wanted to compensate the teachers in some way for their additional time. She said (I am paraphrasing as I recollect our conversation) she wanted them to feel appreciated, knows they will put in far more time than we are paying them for, and would like to show her gratitude and make them feel valued. She said. "I know this is not a lot, but we can put this in our budget and make it work." Maybe they will use it to exchange knowledge, grow their practice. (Fieldnote, meeting with Special Education Director, January 22, 2016)

When the director made this fund allocation, the intent was not to have these teachers supervised during their meeting times or require them to produce an artifact that held them accountable for what they discussed in the meetings. This intent differed from practices the district was already mandating and that were extremely unpopular among teachers—specifically that teachers collaborate and produce an artifact at each meeting to signal what they had accomplished. Ms. Jacobs was clear: All she wanted was for teachers to have the opportunity to collaborate, consult with each other, and learn through interactions with their colleagues. This is another illustration of how middle-level management was breaking away from the upper-level management philosophies.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Access, the district's upper management had denied roster membership for students with disabilities who were included in general education classrooms. To make the information presented next more relevant and understandable, I capture the discussion on membership on the general education roster here. Students who were part of these inclusion programs were classified as having "mild–moderate" needs. Without inclusion programs, they would have been placed in segregated classrooms in various schools throughout the district. The location of these classrooms depended on availability of classroom space and on which school principal was open to having SDC classrooms at their site. However, with the implementation of inclusion programs, the students with disabilities were placed at the schools that housed these inclusion programs—even if the students did not "belong" to these school sites (i.e., even if these were not the students' neighborhood schools). For general education students, *belonging* is determined by where a student lives; residence dictates which school they will attend. For students with an IEP needing SDC (i.e., mild–moderate or moderate–severe), the location of the program determines which school they attend.

Students who participated in the inclusion programs were placed on the special education teacher's roster, despite attending general education classrooms for most of the day. In California, it is accepted practice to consider students who are in general education classrooms for more than half of the school day to be members of the general education classroom and to be on the general education roster. However, due to NEUSD's policy related to funding and costs associated with rostering, inclusion students were not placed on the general education roster. Further, they were added over the maximum number in the general education classroom. That is, if 24 students were the recommended class size in a general education classroom for that grade level, then including these students would exceed the recommendation. When the number of students eligible for

general education classrooms exceeded the maximum class-size limit, the school would have to add a new section.

Most general education teachers were against having more than the recommended class size because having too many students could lead to overcrowding within the classroom and dilution of the time teachers invest in each pupil. Further, district management stated these schools were already "overloading" students who belonged to that school into other district schools and cited funding limitations. *Overloading* happens when a school reaches maximum capacity at a grade level. That school then busses students who live in the area (i.e., who "belong" to that school) to attend schools in other parts of the district to balance the class loads. District management also explained that adding new sections when existing general education classes exceeded size limits would increase overall costs—it required hiring teachers and other administrative costs. To avoid overloading and the additional costs, the district agreed in the special MOU to pay teachers a stipend to accept a class size over the recommended limit. By doing so, they avoided the more prohibitive costs of hiring new teachers.

The teachers' union emerged as an unlikely protagonist in this narrative. While the union was working to ensure teachers were protected and were adequately compensated, they inadvertently lost sight of what was best for the students. The following discussion unveils how the union protected its members and how events unfolded. As shown in the previous fieldnotes, when the inclusion programs were being conceptualized, time was built in for planning and collaborating. Because I was involved in conceptualizing these programs, I was responsible for contacting teachers, providing information, relaying questions to the district-level Special Education Office, and being a liaison.

In the next discussion fieldnote, I was talking with the two kindergarten teachers at one of the first school sites to adopt the inclusion programs. We were planning for the rollout. Because upper management had not approved the students' membership on the general education roster, Ms. Jacobs worked the budget to ensure staffing (paraeducator support) was adequate at each grade level. The general education teachers welcomed this approach. Now, they would have not only the support of the special education teacher to plan, implement, and co-teach, but the additional support of a paraeducator, who is a teacher's assistant and can be trained to work with small groups, prepare materials, grade papers, and so on. I sat with the kindergarten teachers at a local coffee shop while we planned for the upcoming school year. I was excited to work with both of them; I had worked with Ms. Hamilton before, and Ms. Olin came highly recommended. Ms. Hamilton was talking about her class schedule. I had told both teachers how the paraeducator's workday was structured (e.g., for lunch breaks and an additional 15-minute break). As we exchanged ideas, Ms. Olin handed me a piece of paper with her class schedule. As shown in the fieldnote, this caused me great distress, rooted in disappointment and in uncovering the mindset of one of the teachers.

> Ms. Olin handed me her schedule, and it did not make sense. Two times on her schedule, she wrote, "No inclusion students allowed." I was puzzled. My stomach did a little flip as I asked what that was. She clarified that since the para[educator] would be on break, and the special ed teacher was not scheduled to be in the classroom at that time, the students with disabilities would have to leave the classroom. Ms. Olin said, "I won't have any support, and so they cannot be there." I was blown away that she thought it would be OK for two 5-year-old students to stand outside the room because the adult who was there to

> support them (not just them, but any student in her class)—but primarily there because of the inclusion program—was on a 15-minute break??!! I probed further and asked why she felt this way. She said that these kids (meaning the kids with disabilities) were not on her class list; hence, she was not obliged to serve them when the support staff were not there. She said, "I don't want the district to take advantage of me and put these extra kids in my classroom." I mentioned to her that the point of this model was to *include*—and not to *stigmatize*—the students by separating them again within the classroom. She repeated the same argument. After 45 minutes, I decided it was not worth continuing the discussion. (Fieldnote, planning meeting, July 11, 2017)

In this fieldnote, the teacher Ms. Olin revealed the extent to which she would allow the students to be included—specifically, they would be included as long as the support staff were present. She indicated that if support staff were not present in the classroom—even to take a 15-minute break—then "inclusion" would not be permitted. The students would have to be somewhere else for that duration. This meant that even if the students were in the middle of an activity or sitting as a group for circle time, they would have to leave the classroom while their support staff took a break that was part of their work contract.

After this discussion, the Director of Special Education called to inform me of a complaint lodged with the Human Resources Department by an (unnamed) teacher. The teacher complained that the district office and Special Education Department were taking advantage of teachers at this school site, which would pilot the inclusion program, by placing special education students above the general education roster.

I had walked out of the lunchroom to take Ms. Jacobs's phone call. I remember my heart racing as I explained what had transpired at the previous kindergarten-planning meeting. Ms. Jacobs reminded me that she was not sure which teacher had complained because the teachers' union had relayed the information to the Human Resources Department. I felt a sense of betrayal: I, too, was a union member. As I finished my conversation with Ms. Jacobs, who promised to keep me informed, two colleagues—teachers participating in the program—pulled me aside. This fieldnote captures our discussion:

> My second fieldnote for the day. Rita and Leona wanted to talk to me outside the faculty lounge just as I finished the call with Ms. Jacobs about the complaint. They said someone has complained about the roster to the union, and the union was asking for a meeting with only the general education teachers and did not want to include the special ed teachers (Ms. S and me). Leona said that Ms. Olin had said she complained to the union, feeling that the district was taking advantage of the teachers. Leona also said that the four other [general education] teachers did not feel that way. They thought that although roster is something we should get, the support provided by the Special Education Department was very robust. Leona and Rita said that, as a union, we can still fight for membership—that is important—but reiterated that they wanted to do *inclusion*. They thought this was the right thing to do. Saying, "Teachers are being taken advantage of" made them feel uncomfortable because it was not true. These were their thoughts and feelings. As I reflect, I think maybe Ms. Olin's complaint is for the best. It will make upper management (those above Ms. Jacobs), who make the budgetary allocations, sit up and take notice. We all want roster membership for kids with disabilities. Let's march forward. (Fieldnote, informal discussion, August 23, 2017)

The other teachers (Ms. Olin's colleagues) who were working at this school site and who had students with disabilities included did not feel as though the district was taking advantage of them. Whereas they agreed that having the students on the roster would make the most sense, they disagreed with Ms. Olin's request to make the disabled students leave the classroom when their paraeducators took a break. Although at the time I felt that the content of her complaint was unwarranted, I could see how it potentially played a pivotal role in the discussion of rostering the students. The complaint prompted a full inquiry by the teachers' union into the incident. The inquiry determined that because of the unwillingness of upper management, who continued to cite budgetary constraints, roster membership was not being given to the students. The union also acknowledged the provisions that the Special Education Director was making: a special education teacher to support the program, paraeducator support, training and consult opportunities, and additional paid time to collaborate after school.

The union president recognized that these provisions came about because the head of the Special Education Department believed this was how all students needed to be educated. In hurried meetings, the union decided it would be prudent to ensure all this was in writing because it would be the only way to hold upper management accountable and ensure the provisions continued to be a priority should Ms. Jacobs leave. What ensued next was a negotiation between the Human Resources Department and the teachers' union. The agreement they drew up included compensation (in the form of a stipend) for teachers taking students over the class-size limits. Additionally, the MOU limited how many students over the class-size limit could be added to a classroom. The union was instrumental in getting the district to document its offer of compensation, training, and paid time for collaboration in the MOU. Thus, in the fight for inclusion, the teachers' union emerged as an unlikely protagonist that, by virtue of a complaint, became entangled in policy decisions. This MOU had a far-reaching impact:

> Unit members in grades TK–6 participating in the Inclusive Education program for Grades TK–6 shall receive a $1,500 stipend for participating, to be paid in two installments.
> There shall always be a paraeducator or the special education teacher scheduled to be in the classroom with the general education teacher at any point in the school day.
> Class size maximums for fully included classrooms in grades TK–6 shall exceed no more than 33 students. (Artifact, excerpt of MOU between school district and teachers' union, October 29, 2019)

Through this MOU, teachers received a guarantee of always having a paraeducator or special education teacher in the classroom. Further, the discussion made clear that the students would *not* be asked to leave the classroom when the paraeducators were on breaks because there would always be coverage for the general education teacher. It also provided a stipend for participating teachers (participation in the program was voluntary, and the decision to participate would be made in agreement with their site administrator) to account for the class-size overages that occurred. Although the union considered it a major "win" to obtain district commitment for resources and support, the parents of the disabled students and their advocates did not appreciate the narrative that then began to circulate. Essentially, the impression was that teachers needed to be paid additional money to take children with disabilities into their general education classrooms, and saying it was "voluntary" suggested a choice—as though providing education for children with disabilities in a general education setting was a choice that a general education teacher could make. In reality, when a teacher is asked to take in more students than their contract stipulates, it

is a choice the teacher can make. However, the fact that these additional students were disabled made this choice inequitable to the choices for general education students. That is, these students' ability to be included rested on much more—and often entirely on—the general education teacher's willingness. That is a deep inequity and a predicament a nondisabled child will never face in this day and age.

Theme #4: Agency to Navigate Anti-Inclusionary Agendas and Other Forms of Resistance in Daily Practices

Theme 3 examined the emergence of the teachers' union as an unlikely protagonist, at first dragged into the situation as a result of a complaint. As a resolution, paraphrasing the words of a strong union advocate (Personal communication, December 10, 2018), a robust MOU was negotiated that ensured the district did not take unfair advantage of its teachers who were willing to include students in their classrooms. Many personnel within the union shared this perspective with me. Although not all teachers participating in the inclusion program necessarily shared this perspective, they appreciated the work the union had put forth with the district to secure paraeducator support, document additional collaboration time, secure opportunities for consultation and training, and provide a stipend. However, they later would come to realize—and repeat many times throughout the interviews—that they would give up that stipend "in a heartbeat" if they could get the students on their general education roster.

Meanwhile, the discussions continued at various IEP meetings. Parents began to complain about disabled students being placed outside the general education roster. One incident happened the day before the start of the academic year, when class lists were posted on the school notice board, and students clamored to see who their teachers for the upcoming year would be. Because the students participating in the inclusion program were on the special education teacher's roster, they were left off their grade-level general education classroom list. Instead, their names were posted on a multigrade list under the special education teacher. I watched these lists go up and, to my utter dismay, saw these students' peers realize that some of their classmates were placed on a separate list.

> I watched Ms. Lee put up the class lists on the bulletin board outside the office. There was already a group of eager students and parents waiting to see who their teachers were going to be. Parents were ready with their phones to take pictures and send to friends who were unable to be here. The kids were chattering noisily, hoping they would be with their friends. As Ms. Lee cleared the space around the bulletin board, she asked the crowd to step back so that she could put up the lists. She said, with humor in her voice, "You'll see it in a few minutes, and then I am sure you are all going to be happy. Now everyone stand back so I can put the lists up." She stapled the lists on to the bulletin board and returned to her office. As she proceeded to leave, the kids and the parents crowded eagerly around [the bulletin board] taking pictures. The students were squealing with delight or disappointment, finding out who their teachers were, who was in their class, and so on. Then one student said, "Hey, why is Andrew not on any of the fourth-grade lists? He's on a separate list with Ms. S, who has only 11 students. What's going on?" Then another student said, "That's the same with my friend Molly. She is with Ms. S, too." The buzz became louder as many other students realized that some of their friends were not on their class lists. I dashed into the office, realizing that because these lists are generated from the central attendance system, and

> these kids were not on the roster, they were on the list of the special education teacher. The principal and office admin realized what had happened. They tried to see if they could add students, but the system would not permit it. Andrew's mom came storming into the office in tears, asking what they were trying to do. Her words are forever etched in my mind: "What is the point of saying they are included when they do not even appear alongside their classmates? Now, Andrew thinks he is not going to be in fourth grade; he thinks he is going to be a in a separate classroom." (Fieldnote, August 25, 2017)

This incident exemplified how policy decisions around inclusive practices affected the students. For the families and the students, all the discussions around rostering became irrelevant if their children and their classmates perceived they lacked true membership in a classroom. This incident uncovered and laid bare that lack of belonging. One student in this case was not aware he had a disability (his parents had chosen not to reveal that information) and wanted to know why he had been assigned to an "SDC teacher." This caused much grief for his parents, who were not keen to divulge to him information regarding his disability. By this point, many within the community had surreptitiously discussed whether concealing his disability was the right choice. Regardless, that decision belonged to their family unit. The policy the district enacted to segregate students not only eroded that decision, but also stigmatized the support this student was receiving when it did not need to. Many students, and this student in particular, did not like being singled out for any reason—and placing his name on a class list designated "SDC" did just that.

The school principal, Mrs. Herrington, had been a vocal advocate for inclusive practices. She felt strongly that what her teachers were asking for and what the parents wanted—true belonging in the classroom—was the right thing. Within minutes of Andrew's mother coming into the office, Mrs. Herrington called Ms. Jacobs and relayed to her what had transpired. Ms. Jacobs, who was responsible for inception of this program, listened carefully. As head of the district's Special Education Department, Ms. Jacobs could make certain decisions in response to the needs being presented. Knowing the anti-inclusionary agenda that existed in the district's upper echelons, she decided to take small steps to advance the opposing agenda—that of those who favored inclusive practices. Students classified as needing "resource support," a type of special education service provided at every school site, typically were placed on the general education roster. Thus, Ms. Jacobs directed site administrators to give spots on the general education roster to students who belonged to that school's attendance area *and* to classify them as receiving resource support. In this way, the students were still supported through the inclusion programs but no longer outsiders to the general education roster.

Ms. Jacobs was unable to place all students in this manner, particularly those who did not "belong" to the school's attendance area, because doing so required the superintendent's direction and multiple departments to coordinate and agree. Nevertheless, as Director of Special Education, Ms. Jacobs had authority to make this decision. If her supervisors questioned her, she could justify it as a decision taken to avoid the risk of being sued. Although resistance is a widespread phenomenon, it typically is considered counterproductive and assigned simply the evaluations of being positive or negative (Chaudhary et al., 2017). However, this and the other data excerpts illustrated that a focus on everyday resistance led to new ways of thinking, feeling, and operating within these contexts. When NEUSD's upper management refused permission to roster the students despite repeated requests by all stakeholders, the lower hierarchy levels experienced the power differential exhibited by those who inhabit spaces where strategic decisions are made. Then,

those at the lower echelons resisted in ways they could control; they made tactical decisions in response to events that unfold daily. Upper management had deployed a strategy in the form of policies that did not allow students with disabilities and classified under the inclusion program to be rostered and attributed their policies to overcrowding and budgetary deficits that may arise as a result of such a move. As de Certeau and Mayol (1998) outlined in their book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, those in positions of power deploy *strategies* against external entities—in this case, the students and their families. *Tactics*, on the other hand, such as those Ms. Jacobs and the school teams used, are defensive, opportunistic, and seized momentarily within spaces governed by those in power. In this case, Ms. Jacobs used her knowledge of a loophole for students who belonged to that attendance area to roster them under a different caseload and gained membership for a subset of the students who had been denied that opportunity.

In many such instances, stakeholders involved in these inclusive programs resisted the authority deployed by those in power. As described in earlier chapters, Maya's parents were partly responsible for the inclusion program being conceptualized. At West Valley, Maya's family unit had resisted events and power plays enacted in their sociocultural contexts, and those actions became the springboard to begin building and sustaining inclusive practices throughout this school district. Their tireless advocacy and belief that their child had every right to a FAPE in a general education classroom served as the impetus. Maya had completed first grade at West Valley Elementary, which was not near her home but was at that time where the district's only inclusion program was located. When she had started kindergarten, the inclusion program did not go on to higher grades. Most students either went to another more restrictive program or back to their home-attendance area after completing first grade.

Maya's parents were certain they did not want their daughter to go to a more restrictive placement; they wanted her to be educated alongside her peers in the community where her home was situated. A robust transition plan was devised, the school in her neighborhood (Bridgeport Elementary) was contacted, and the Bridgeport team was involved in every step of creating the program. There were collaborative meetings, observations, interviews, and records reviewed. The whole team felt confident that the transition would be smooth.

Things did not go well for Maya in the new school. This was evident to Maya's mother on the second day, when the site principal commented that Maya should not vocalize in the classroom because this was not how students in general education behaved. However, Maya vocalized because she was nonverbal; the vocalizations were part of her repertoire of communicative means and sometimes she could not control them. The part of her disability that most affected Maya's functioning in school was motor apraxia. *Motor apraxia* is difficulty experienced when motor planning to perform tasks or movements on request. These vocalizations were not meant to be disruptive, as the principal implied to Maya's mother, but a way for Maya to communicate what she was thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Maya's large team of specialists helped provide consultation and direct service to facilitate her access and participation in her learning. According to her mother, Maya was constantly observed at the new classroom with multiple people standing behind her and talking in whispered voices. At first, these observations appeared necessary, in part to educate the new team to assist Maya. However, it soon became obvious to Maya's mother that the general education teacher and principal were unwilling to believe that Maya had the capability to perform the required expectations of a general education classroom. In the following transcript excerpt, Maya's mother recounted what transpired on the second day of school, when the principal had waited for her by the school entrance:

Principal says to me [Maya's mother]: Did you hear that your daughter had a bad day yesterday?
Maya's mother: No, that is not what I heard. Why do you say so?
Principal: Oh, we had all these people, and she was vocal three times in class, and I don't think that is a good fit.
Maya's mother's voice chokes and she cries as she recounts this incident. (Interview, April 27, 2017)

Although this interaction raised a few red flags, Maya's parents were hopeful that once a routine was established, things would improve. However, that was not to be the case. In the following interview excerpt, Maya's mother recounts how things progressed and what she was forced to do in the end.

> This went on for many weeks, and I recognized that my child was getting stressed. As she was walking to school, this kid who used to zip and run to her classroom at West Valley was now pausing and not wanting to walk to her neighborhood school. Didn't seem right. And then, uhm, I said I want to have an observation and see how class is going. And I am telling you this. This was the general education teacher's style. and these are 8-year-olds, 7- and 8-year-olds. With their hands on their lap or on the table. Not fidgeting, completely silent as she would teach. I looked at it and I said, I don't see this for my kid. I mean, everyone has different things. I am fidgeting as I am speaking here. Everybody has many things that they do to focus, and there were a multitude of issues.
>
> I called for a meeting and I said it was the most heartbreaking decision as a parent for me (voice chokes) that my child was getting bullied out of her school, of a school that she belonged in. So, we had this discussion and, as we were having this discussion, her 6-week progress report came. She got a C grade in Math, and the progress report's narrative said I don't believe this child is capable of learning even with the accommodations, and the second part was said, and this is the narrative from the GE [general education] teacher, second part of the narrative said she likes to keep telling jokes to me, and I find that disruptive. And I vividly remember this because I showed this and I wanted this redacted from her records because I said, hey, my child gets a C grade and I don't see why that is bad. Whatever grade she gets, anybody who thinks a child is incapable of learning cannot be teaching. I will put a period and am done with it and I am done with that statement and I will hold to it. And then I had shown this report to the Special Ed Director Ms. Jacobs, who looked at it and said, "But she was telling a joke; she was trying to build a connection." And I remember sitting in Ms. Jacobs' office and having this discussion and saying why my child cannot go back to that school anymore. It was the most heartbreaking time (voice chokes), and I said, I am pulling my kid out. As a parent, I felt I had no options. Special ed is a very scary place to be in because of so many legal things, and everybody in some way is worried about where the legal angle is. I think it destroys having an honest conversation about children. It is important and it needs to be there. It reflects historically how kids have been discriminated upon, but if we talk about how do we support, instead of this child does not belong here, [then] we will have much better support built in.
>
> The next day, I went to the school and met the principal, and my husband and I said we are pulling our kid out. This is what I told the principal. I had to tell why this failed. My kid was a new kid in your school. You did not see her that way, that this child did not

> have a friend (voice chokes) [and] needed to build relationships. In those 6 weeks, she actually met a lot of people and built connections with them. But none of that was really seen. But what was vivid to me is I asked the principal, would you like it if there are eight people standing behind you, watching you, and seeing how you work? Because that is what you did to my child. You were all standing behind her, observing whether she fits into your class or not, asking her to prove that she belongs in this classroom. And these are barriers we create as humans and that somehow has to stop. So I am doing what I can now and that is, I am pulling my kid out. (Interview, April 27, 2017)

In this transcript, Maya's mother revealed how students such as her daughter—students who have more significant needs—were (in some instances) not even given a chance to be educated alongside their peers. Maya was continually asked to prove her "fit" to be in a general education classroom and probably was evaluated more frequently than were her typically developing peers. Maya's mother also uncovered the strategies and mechanisms that the school used to prove Maya was not a good fit (e.g., complaining that she vocalized in the classroom, told jokes that were disruptive, or could not learn even with accommodations).

As a participant observer while this unfolded, I attest to the frustrations Maya and her parents experienced. A week after school started at Bridgeport Elementary, Maya's mother asked that we meet so Maya could give me a little present from her vacation to Yosemite. As mentioned earlier, Maya was nonverbal and used a speech-generating device to communicate. When I walked over to say hello and hug her, she burst into tears. For almost 10 minutes, Maya could not stop sobbing. Distraught, her mother and I used various strategies to communicate with her and eventually figured out that Maya was unhappy about school. She felt she had no allies at Bridgeport. Although she had been telling her mother that things were going well, she could not keep up that facade with me because I had been with her at her previous school (West Valley), where she had thrived.

The Bridgeport Elementary general education teacher and principal had expressed serious concerns about whether Maya was a good candidate for a general education placement. They appeared to think that the West Valley Elementary team had made a mistake in recommending Maya for inclusion. As part of the transition team, I was involved with knowledge transfer. I became concerned about the kinds of questions being asked about Maya and some statements the teacher made regarding Maya's abilities. To ensure that Maya continued to receive a quality education, Ms. Jacobs and I approached the West Valley Elementary principal and teachers and spoke to them about what had transpired. They were firm in their belief that no student should ever experience an exclusionary agenda, and they welcomed Maya with open arms. When we relayed the news to Maya's mother, she was firm in her conviction that Maya should finish elementary school at West Valley and not be placed at Bridgeport or yet another school after a year. I had hoped Maya's parents would say that. Their example would serve the purpose of expanding the inclusion program beyond first grade at West Valley and provide that opportunity to many more students.

What happened with Maya is not unique. These sorts of exclusionary agendas play out every day in schools across America. What was unique in Maya's case was that her parents observed, advocated, and resisted the anti-inclusionary agenda and traditional scripts of a deficit construction of the disabled that forces them out of regular classrooms. Maya's parents were the

force for change that this community needed. In so being, they inspired a movement towards inclusive education and cemented a better outcome for their daughter.

Theme #5: Staff's Entrepreneurial Nature Helped Facilitate Better Resources and Structures

The technological supports and other resources that schools need in general cost money. The site administrators, district Special Education Department administrators, and teachers at schools that housed inclusion programs displayed exceptional levels of entrepreneurial characteristics that allowed them to garner resources. Many teachers applied for grants from organizations such as donorschoose.org and other small philanthropies to generate funds to meet their students' needs. They purchased equipment, such as flexible seating, laptops, and other technological tools that promoted access and participation. They did not do this for only students with special needs, but for all their students—so there was no stigma attached to any one person using the resources. One principal secured a large grant that provided his school with an advanced, flexible room that had chairs and tables that could be configured to suit any working group's needs. It included advanced audiovisual equipment, multiple screens, whiteboards, and other tools that promoted student collaboration and cooperative learning. Teachers also partnered with universities and received training, funds, and other materials to improve their practice. In the following interview transcript, Mrs. Halliday talked about how these small grants helped her grow her classroom's supply of tools.

> When I first did the small grant, I was a little scared, not knowing how this would go. But then it got funded, and my kids were able to get four iPads. That was amazing. Then I thought, I should get things that would make the learning more engaging, and I wrote many other grants and slowly started getting different stuff. Like, I got the flexible seating options, and my kids loved it. Then, you know, what my kids needed to move, they did, or they sat on a chair that allowed them that movement. And I told the kids, you can get up and make good decisions and sit where you want because all I want is for you to learn. This was awesome for me. Then I helped Leona write a grant, and then she got stuff for her room. We started talking about it, and slowly all of us started writing mini-grants to get our kids what they needed. (Focus group, June 4, 2018)

This example is representative of the anecdotes shared and observational data I collected within these schools. The Special Education Department also supported these efforts by working on mini-grants and providing small amounts of money to help grow the resources each teacher had. Hehir and Katzman (2012) reported observing similar entrepreneurial spirits, although specifically in school-site administrators of inclusive schools in Massachusetts. In the schools represented in my dataset, also many teachers and staff members appeared to display the enthusiasm needed to obtain funding to garner materials and resources both for their classrooms and for other schools outside of district allocations.

Discussion

This chapter examined the support structures needed to undergird inclusive education within the NEUSD. The themes highlighted in this chapter represent the murkiness and lack of clear delineation of some practices that aid inclusion and others that were clearly barriers—as though the scaffolds and undergirding were firm and strong in some areas but crumbled at first

signs of tension at other points. In the conceptual framework for inclusion (Chapter 2), I highlighted practices that the literature touted as beneficial to grow and sustain inclusive education: communities of practice, PLCs, and opportunities to consult and collaborate. Communities of practice and consultation and collaboration emerged as dominant themes also in this chapter, cementing what was proposed in the conceptual framework. The first theme validated the importance of communities of practice and demonstrated the various ways in which these communities emerged organically within these school sites, unique in their conception and sustenance. The communities mutually engaged as a social entity in an enterprise, were constantly renegotiated, and thereby produce a shared repertoire of the routines (weekly planning meetings), sensibilities (towards inclusion and how to counter negative narratives), artifacts (e.g., the "Levels of Support" document and lesson plans), and teaching and learning styles they developed over time.

However, the themes related to parental involvement in the IEP team pointed to the underlying murkiness and tensions. Although I witnessed countless instances of true engagement and collaborative problem-solving, artifacts such as the document Cameron's mother shared made evident that much more undergirding would be required to strengthen those collaborative supports. That document also brought to light the frangible nature of the support structure.

Another theme that emerged addressed the ways in which participants countered the anti-inclusionary agenda and tactically resisted the power structures in their daily practices. This resistance was displayed in the tactical moves made by participants who felt powerless and cornered. They executed these moves to register their resistance and push forward their inclusion agenda. The tactics they used were levers of change required to move the inclusionary vison and agenda forward in a climate that was not fully conducive to viewing the rights of the disabled as central alongside everyone else's. Those who pushed for an inclusive agenda were juxtaposed with those who believed that children with disabilities, especially those with significant needs, did not belong in general education settings. Maya's mother expressed feeling as though she were at the receiving end of a concerted strategy by the principal and general education teacher, who, by virtue of their positions, had the power to exclude Maya.

Maya's mother did what she felt was her only option—using a tactic to resist what was happening to Maya at Bridgeport Elementary. By displaying their agency and resistance, Maya's parents expressed their dissent to the strategic actions the school principal and teacher had taken. As Chaudhary et al. (2017) theorized, "Resistance can be a location of intense personal, interpersonal and cultural negotiation" (p. 2). Those authors explained that resistance is not a simple process, and new ways of thinking, feeling, and living emerge as a result of resisting. From the data examined in this chapter, it was apparent that the parents' decision to resist the school administrator's actions to exclude their daughter and "bully her out of her school" led to conceptualizing an inclusion program that benefited not only their daughter, but also the many more students who would follow her. The parents' resistance to the anti-inclusionary agenda helped build the vision articulated by the law and propel local development of these practices. My positionality as Maya's former teacher and the deep connection I had forged with her mother, in particular, allowed me to witness and experience the trauma Maya's family endured for the 6 weeks Maya remained at Bridgeport.

The Bridgeport principal, Maya's general education teacher, and Cameron's IEP team made visible the linkages between normative expectations and educational settings: A child was expected to behave and act in certain ways to merit a spot in a general education setting. Certain

norms were considered essential. Children who did not display those normative behaviors were not considered "fit to be included." At that point, these children were viewed as the sum of their deficits and relegated to segregated settings, where their supposed needs would be addressed in isolation. These pathologizing narratives became roadblocks to disabled students' entry into general education classrooms.

Maya's teacher and Cameron's IEP team revealed their apprehensions about having children with significant disabilities in the general education classroom, even though these children had the support of a special education teacher, paraeducators, and other staff. Maya and Cameron were considered too disabled to be included. Although it may appear that these staff needed to change their mindsets about who could be included, that same mindset developed in part because these teachers must teach within the dual bureaucracies of general and special education that currently exist (Skrtic, 1995).

This system was not fully inclusive, and what was excavated here is the dominant meta-narrative about disability within the education system. Historically, progressive-era reforms brought large numbers of students into the public school systems. Governed by the factory-efficiency model, the problem of educating children with disabilities was cast to efficiency experts, who recommended segregating students in separate settings so as not to disrupt the education of "regular" children (Haber, 1964; Lazerson, 1983).

With the continued push for mainstreaming, education was reimagined after the passage of PL 94-142 and reauthorization of the IDEA. However, an organizational problem in the field of education still needs recognition: Schools divide labor based on occupation. Hence, anything related to children with disabilities has come to rest with the departments of special education (Skrtic, 1995). In the cases described in this chapter, Maya's teacher and Cameron's IEP team felt that these students would benefit from a segregated setting—given that the district had such segregated settings available as placement options. However, this notion resulted from the underlying assumptions that the disabled can be "fixed" in a vacuum (segregated classrooms) where the sole goal is to hold students and work on their problems until they are ready to be released into the mainstream.

Although my language to describe these underlying assumptions may sound harsh to some, it is intended to controvert the belief espoused by many educators that special education was a (separate) profession set up to help children with disabilities. Bogdan and Kugelmass (1984) theorized that special education's disciplinary foundation views disability as a condition in *individuals*—that there are differences between typical and disabled children, and special education was conceived to assist children with disabilities. These assumptions take the onus away from the environment and context and place blame and responsibility squarely on the child whose behavior does not comply with set norms. These assumptions are barriers to inclusive education. Whereas *impairment* may have a neurological or biological basis, *disability* is a result of the barriers society erects.

Notably, discussions regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion within the school district of this study largely emphasized racial equity and gender diversity. This attitude was also evident in district-wide initiatives to address racial equity and gender diversity. However, the district's upper management required the inclusion program, which addressed the needs of students with disabilities, to be "cost neutral." If we were to consider the disabled as a minority community, then they would be the largest community and the only one to which any person may, at some point in their life, gain membership (UN, n.d.). The intersectional nature of issues surrounding access for

the disabled and the complexities of the prejudices the disabled face has been well established. Researchers have proposed frameworks such as “Dis-Crit” to articulate and recognize the material and psychological realities of being labeled as disabled (Annamma et al., 2013). Nevertheless, despite these frameworks that acknowledge ways in which people are marginalized, the cases in this chapter illustrate a lingering prevalence of ableist attitudes.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This dissertation has two parts: The first part outlines a conceptual framework that school districts and LEAs can use to design, implement, and sustain inclusive practices. The second part is an empirical study of an inclusion program using qualitative methods. In addition to interviews and semi-structured group discussions, I carried out participant observations to generate data.

In the empirical portion of this dissertation, I capture the lived experiences of disabled students; their teachers, parents, and staff; and how each navigated the educational contexts, interacted with each other, and pathologized and were pathologized as a result of being part of the special education system. In doing so, I untangle oppressive ideologies that are prevalent in narratives about the disabled and destabilize any claims made to a normative ideal. Through the vignettes, emerging themes, and the ensuing analyses, I illuminate the tensions that bubbled to the surface. There were people within the school district offices who advocated for inclusion to be available to those who were not "too" deviant from the norm. There were tensions, arguments, and disagreements when they faced those who believed in the necessity to change and move towards a broader notion of diversity. So, although students were included—that is, their bodies were in the general education (physical or virtual) classrooms—they did not appear alongside their peers on class rosters. The disabled students were literally othered (on the class roster) and designated as a separate group of students (called the "inclusion students") because policies and attitudes followed them into the general education classrooms and erected barriers. In the following pages, I demonstrate examples of resistance and leadership displayed by parents, students, and staff while they went about their daily work of doing being inclusive and argue that ableist notions in action are powerful forces that create and sustain inequities. I synthesize the tensions, the push towards inclusion, and the segregation that happened sometimes simultaneously within these spaces.

My interviews, discussions, observational notes, and examination of artifacts that the staff and teachers produced as part of their day-to-day work make evident that some teachers and staff recognized the variability that existed in their classrooms. While engaging in reflective practices, teachers were recognizing that exclusion happened when they designed with their own biases in mind (Holmes, 2020). When the teachers understood these acts of exclusionary practice, they set about designing normalizing solutions and incorporated them into their lessons and professional practice. These solutions became proactive design features that any student could use and dismantled the narrative of disabled students always needing accommodations and modifications.

The terms *accommodations* and *modifications* imply that there is a norm, and a disabled student does not meet that norm; hence, the disabled student needs to be accommodated by others who are at that implied normative level. These design features or adaptations (intended for use by one or maybe a few) were then extended to many in the classroom, and the ideas were shared via the teachers' community of practice meetings. These are examples of action-oriented principles that the teachers brought to fruition by identifying mismatches within the environment. The conceptual framework I propose in Chapter 2 outlines the first central tenet to be *access*. I propose that frameworks such as UDL and related technological assists can be used to promote access. In the following paragraphs, I delve into how UDL was executed.

I highlight a few salient examples in which teachers displayed implementation of the principles of UDL, progress monitoring that encompasses all students, and utilization of AT within

their classroom community, and, more importantly, in the language and thought processes they used around, about, and with the students and their families.

When Ms. LW (Chapter 3) told her students that they could demonstrate their understanding of the text they were reading in ways that emphasized their own strengths, she provided multiple means of action and expression, which is a central principle of UDL. By doing so, she allowed each student to self-determine the path by which they chose to exhibit their learning and reiterated that there was not one way to reach a goal. This is the principle of multiple pathways that T. Rose (2016) argues is the foundation for the science of individuality. Additionally, when Ms. LW made available to all her students the videos that she had created for Ana, she exhibited her understanding of the usefulness of adaptations becoming proactive design elements that then begin to benefit a wider audience. Similarly, when ramps were constructed in buildings to provide access to disabled users, access to the building opened to many more than the intended audience. The parents' affirmations of Ms. LW's strategy to make the videos available to all students was proof of concept that variability existed and that multiple ways to represent and enact the curriculum were essential.

Mrs. Steck and Mrs. Leonard (Chapter 3) demonstrated how they increased student engagement in their classroom by building in movement breaks for all students. This way, the breaks did not stigmatize the one student, who possibly externalized his need for movement by displaying behaviors that were considered non-normative. These teachers were honoring their student by creating a supportive and rigorous environment—a platform that provided all students with equitable opportunities to succeed (Fitzgerald, 2020). They assisted the student by minimizing threats (other students stigmatizing him for needing support with attention) and distractions (making movement breaks a universal feature of their instruction).

When Arav's teacher made notes available to him, and when Mrs. Ryan commented about not wanting to call attention to Joe's manner of attending during circle time, they respected their students' autistic sensory experience (Nolan & McBride, 2015) instead of interpreting it as a sensory integration disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which produces a normative sensory ideal. Institutional spaces such as classrooms have become grounds where the medical model and behavior-based interventions are authorized as treatments to extinguish problem behaviors. Instead, these teachers rejected those outdated models of behavior performativity, which are steeped in ableist discourse about the autistic (Nolan & McBride, 2015). Importantly, although it may seem that change needs to happen in policy and at higher institutional levels, it is in the classrooms where barriers to access are enacted—and these teachers were making changes within their classrooms. We also witnessed an access drift when teachers' instructional design choices opened up and expanded accessibility for other students who were not originally intended to receive those accessibility benefits (Dolmage, 2017).

The conceptual framework that I propose in Chapter 2 outlines the need to include structures that improve access to general education and mechanisms that increase meaningful participation. The data made visible these modes of participation. Teams used progress-monitoring assessments at frequent intervals for all students, under the assumption that again spoke to their belief in variability. Students are not one-dimensional, ranging from struggling to gifted (T. Rose, 2016). They all have profiles of strengths and areas of need. The only way to determine areas of need will be to engage in assessment practices that measure student progress *in those areas*. The teams discussed in Chapter 2 engaged in such practices and made determinations that allowed them to form fluid and flexible groups for intervention and instruction.

These programmatic structures facilitated increased participation. When a student takes a progress-monitoring assessment and displays an area of need in that subject area or skill, the team may assign that student to partake in small group instruction that prepares the students to learn or relearn that concept or subject matter. By having the student take part in small group instruction or intervention, the student benefits by interacting with an adult to work on those specific skills and receives feedback and assistance as needed. Additionally, teams meet to review student progress and determine if adaptation or intensification of the intervention is necessary (National Center for Intensive Intervention, 2020). This level of intervention increases student success (Choi et al., 2020). In the case of the particular schools in the NEUSD, the intervention was instrumental in reducing referrals to special education (for students who were considered at risk in general education classes). Administrators, teachers, and related-service staff reported this key facet at meetings.

In addition to intervention and instructional support, the teams used other mechanisms to increase participation. One method that parents reported as being useful was volume reduction. *Volume reduction* is the act of reducing the amount of work that teachers assign for completion. It is based on the idea that learning, teaching, and assessing all standards will provide an education that is too broad and lacking in depth. If all teachers were trained and held accountable to implement UDL principles, then this issue might not even surface. Using the principle of multiple means of action and expression would allow the student agency to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways and would steer away from traditional assignments that require extensive writing and completion of worksheets (D. H. Rose & Meyer, 2002). However, because not all teachers implement UDL in their classrooms, other mechanisms are required to prevent disabled students from being penalized for not completing the same quantity of work as other students. School districts ask teachers to prioritize standards so that all students receive instruction in the priority areas; these example teams used that already-existing structure to reduce the work that teachers typically assigned. By doing so, the disabled students—especially those who needed additional time to complete a task—were not always playing "catch up." The teams incorporated this concept into the students' IEPs and thereby lent credibility to the practice and ensured its realization.

Communities of practice emerged as an effective structure through which knowledge, information, and ideas were disseminated to a wider audience. The communities of practice meetings were used to describe and discuss which episodes and instances were facilitators and which were barriers. In these meetings, the groups learned from each other and planned for better outcomes for all the students they served. These meetings were tools to inspire innovative practices, discussion grounds for new ideas, and forums for exploration (Mortier, 2018). Along with communities of practices, consultation and collaboration emerged as fruitful mechanisms to sustain and enhance support structures, cementing what was proposed in the conceptual framework of Chapter 2. The data revealed that teams valued communities of practice and demonstrated the various ways in which they emerged organically within the school sites, unique in their conception and sustenance. The communities mutually engaged as social entities in an enterprise. Over time, they produced a shared repertoire of the routines (weekly planning meetings), sensibilities (towards inclusion and how to counter negative narratives), artifacts (e.g., the "Levels of Support" document and lesson plans), and teaching and learning styles.

I have synthesized the themes that speak to the utility of using frameworks such as UDL to improve access to the general education context, as well as participatory mechanisms that facilitate inclusive education. Last, I showed that communities of practice, along with consultation

and collaboration, undergird the supports necessary to build and sustain inclusive education at this district. This analysis so far has established the validity of the conceptual framework.

As the analysis in each chapter already revealed, however, barriers and facilitators are juxtaposed, pushing and pulling at each other and contributing to palpable tensions that surrounded implementation of inclusive education. This research study examines change processes at play in classrooms and schools, as well at the organizational level in the school district offices. Teachers, staff, and parents understood that implementing UDL is key to ensuring access, and that it is also necessary to incorporate practices within existing structures to bring the letter of the law into focus. That is, when something is incorporated into the IEP document, the gaze of the legal system is directed towards its implementation (Engel, 1991). By incorporating these practices in the IEP, these participants made strong moves towards systemic change.

Next, I examine some of these moves using the frame of levers as Ainscow (2005) proposed. *Levers* are "actions that can be taken in order to change the behavior of an organization and those individuals within it" (p. 7). I leverage insights that I gained as a result of being an active member of the district, moving the organization purposefully towards inclusive practices, and as a researcher whose work focuses on inclusion.

As this dissertation shows, educational practices such as UDL and tiered models of intervention and instruction effectively increase opportunities for true inclusion. However, as my analyses in previous chapters reveal, barriers are constantly enacted even within schools where these programs are present. Hence, while encouraging the organization and its people to change by providing consultation, coaching, and training in UDL and other practices, other actions had to be taken more forcefully to implement these practices. That is, when discriminatory attitudes surfaced against students with disabilities and teachers tried to exclude these students from general education contexts by saying they were unable to complete the volume of work, then practices such as volume reduction were put in place. Writing "volume reduction" into the IEP is another example of triggering the legal mechanisms. That is, the system experienced pushback. It was forced to take notice and rectify the marginalization these particular students experienced. These were some ways in which the legal complexities of the IEP were utilized to promote better access, participation, and supports for disabled students. Further, when the experiences were shared at the communities of practice meetings, the shared knowledge was used to effect change for other students.

In another example of how different systems and groups push against each other, jostling for visibility, the teacher's union emerged as an unlikely protagonist. While the district was planning inclusion programs and placing more students than the class limits, the teacher's union invoked a contract clause that forbid districts to place students above the roster number without providing additional compensation. Importantly, the union swooped in to ensure that the district was not taking advantage of union members. However, it inadvertently othered the disabled students by asking the district to pay general education teachers a stipend for including them and amplified the message that teachers were paid extra money to include students with disabilities. The district's continued pushback to provide seats in the classroom is yet another demonstration of how disabled students are marginalized. In this case, the union's action could have been a lever that propelled the district to move towards inclusive education in a more permanent way by providing rostered seats in the general education classrooms. Instead, the district chose to use that lever in a manner that served the district's financial bottom line. By annually renewing the MOU

and paying stipends, the district continued the practice of othering disabled students. The money the district saved in stipends were a minimal gain compared with providing true membership.

Research has shown that policies are play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education. In this dissertation, I demonstrate instances of exclusionary policies. When the district office refused to allow a spot on the roster for disabled children, they were implementing a policy that dictated that special education students, who otherwise would have been educated in separate settings, need to be on the special education roster. Thus, even though the inclusion "programs" were conceived to implement the letter of the law, that implementation clashed with an existing policy. The teacher's union sprang into action when they realized that placing students above the roster violated contractual class-size limits. Although the union and the district each negotiated from their respective vantage points, parents who wanted their disabled children included were left watching because those parents lacked an organized presence. The parents who had time, money, and knowledge to fight the district did so in their own child's IEP meetings. This brings to the surface the inequities that exist—the marginalization of students whose parents have neither the means nor the wherewithal to fight a bureaucratic system that is based on professionalized knowledge many parents do not possess.

Nonetheless, this dissertation also reveals that individuals creatively resisted the organization's practices and the power it wields. For instance, Ms. Jacobs used the power vested in her to push back against the upper-management policy of not providing roster placement by using a loophole. She made a tactical move in response to upper management's strategic move (de Certeau & Mayol, 1998). As another example, when it appeared that the administrator and general education teacher were invoking normative requirements to push Maya out of the general education classroom, Maya's mother resisted by pulling Maya out of the school. By doing so, she triggered the Special Education Department to find a school that would be inclusive of her child. Maya's mother could have lodged a complaint against the school district with the State DOE or Office of Civil Rights. Awareness of the mother's options triggered the Special Education Department to act. This was again a tactical response to a concerted exclusionary move made by that principal and general education teacher. As Chaudhary et al. (2017) theorized, "Resistance can be a location of intense personal, interpersonal and cultural negotiation" (p. 2). Those authors explained that resistance is not a simple process, and new ways of thinking, feeling, and living emerge as a result of resisting. From the data examined in this study, it is apparent that parents' decisions to resist the school administration's actions to exclude their children led the NEUSD to conceptualize an inclusive program for the children. The parents' resistance to the anti-inclusionary agenda helped build the vision articulated by the law and propel local development of these practices.

My dissertation findings point to another key facet, perhaps the most important factor in the success of such endeavors: mindset and attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Mindsets can influence whether the disabled student merits a spot in general education. Ableist attitudes shape presumptions that students must act in predetermined ways to merit the label of normality (Danforth, 2017). Ableism "uncritically asserts that it is better for a child to walk than to roll, speak than to sign, read print than read braille, spell independently than use spell check" (Hehir, 2002, p. 3).

The construct of disability is a historically situated system of differentiating "normal" and "abnormal" bodies (Bingham, 2020), as was evident in the work of Quetelet, a mathematician who wrote extensively about the concept of averages (Jahoda, 2015). With the imprint of science and

objectivity, he proposed that the average was normal and the individual the error. His student, Sir Francis Galton, acknowledged Quetelet as a gifted statistician but differed on one major aspect. Galton believed in types: eminent, average, and imbecile. Thorndike (1911), another famous educational researcher, believed that the ultimate goal of schooling should be to sort people into categories so that these institutions could determine the types of jobs or occupations best suited for them (T. Rose, 2016).

This practice of sorting still prevails in schools that differentiate individual students by ability. Students in special education are sorted into categories that translate to the type of classroom—mild-to-moderate, moderate, moderate–severe, and intensive instruction—with intensive instruction typically being the most restrictive placement (as determined by adult-to-student ratio). Such across-the-board labeling practices lead to intensive surveillance, as this dissertation shows in Keerthan's and Maya's cases. These disabled students were excessively monitored, categorized, punished, and excluded (Annamma, 2017). When Keerthan's teachers decided not to call the psychologist, they recognized that doing so (alerting the psychologist) would trigger documentation of his supposed "misbehavior," appearing permanently in his IEP and thus allowing future teams to count it as another example of his ineligibility to be included with typically developing peers. This not only exemplifies the prevalent hypervigilance and surveillance practices, but also speaks to the team's awareness of those control mechanisms and their resistance to them in their daily practices (de Certeau & Mayol, 1998). The team was aware that these practices could lead to exclusionary acts, physically and metaphorically, because the child's place in the general education classroom was constantly scrutinized and questioned.

Such oppressive surveillance was also visible when students were constantly scrutinized for the amount of work they completed and the time they took to complete it, as recorded in the gradebooks teachers maintained. This was one factor used to determine the students' "fit" to remain in a general education setting. Again, participants who believed in inclusive education resisted these exclusionary moves by instead documenting (hence, requiring) practices such as volume reduction to be implemented. By formalizing and officializing this in the IEPs, the teams ensured compliance and prevented the disabled students from being excluded based on those reasons.

Additionally, many teachers did not allow choice in how students demonstrated their understanding of the content. For instance, a teacher may require students to write an essay to demonstrate their understanding of a topic. A student who struggles with this mode of expression, regardless of the content, will always fail. By privileging certain types of work production over others and thus showing how the student did not meet arbitrary standards, these teachers could build a case for exclusion. This was one more example of the hyper surveillance that can lead to enactment of exclusionary practices. There are definitely teachers and team members who believe that all students have a right to be in general education. However, as seen in the "fit" narrative, others believe that certain deviations from the norm are too disabling and hence require specialized supports and services that could be provided only in separate classrooms. Such a practice is contrary to the law, which states that supports and services should be provided *within general education* to the "maximum extent appropriate." Nevertheless, these very words are sometimes quoted to exclude—as in the "maximum extent" has been tried and it is no longer appropriate for the student to be included.

At what point does a student become too disabled to benefit from inclusion? Some believe in IQ as the determinant; others believe it is the presence of behavioral difficulties, academic

deviance from the grade-level standard, or medical needs. Are these notions fueled by the existence of the dual bureaucracies, general education and special education (Skrtic, 1991)? Given the overarching concern to increase efficiency of schools, moving those "too deviant" from the norm to separate settings was once seen as an efficient solution. Then, in the 1980s, the rallying cry became to provide "full access to a restructured mainstream" (Skrtic, 1987, p. 2). However, as Skrtic (1987) explained, this problem really stems from the way labor is divided: Special education is responsible for disabled students, implying the need to develop a separate knowledge base in order to educate them. This implication is visible in my research study, as well. Specifically, many general education and special education teachers assumed that students with disabilities required specialized knowledge and training that only special education teachers in separate classrooms could provide.

In all the examples discussed in previous chapters, the general education context as an institutional structure became the physical location where this exclusionary rhetoric was espoused with planned or fortuitous material and cultural realities (Mountford, 2001). They illustrate ideas and relationships and represent spaces where the discourse surrounding inclusion and exclusion is made visible—a rhetorical space. This space came to typify cultural traditions denotive of oppression and social injustice. The practices enacted within the walls of the general education classroom become exclusionary, stemming from the way content was taught and how students were required to demonstrate their understanding in order to merit a spot within those walls. These places then become spaces where the rhetoric justifying exclusion is enacted (Dolmage, 2017). However, teachers, staff, parents, and administrators, through their advocacy, resistance, and professional practices critiqued and reshaped those spaces through persuasion and pedagogy.

Future Directions

The framework presented in this dissertation challenges the need for segregated placements for disabled students. By virtue of its theoretical foundation, it questions whether there truly exists clear demarcations between those who are disabled and those who are not. By espousing that variability is the norm and centering the lived realities of the disabled, the framework interrogates the intolerant and unjust system that segregates students who do not "fit" into the normative mold. The utility of this framework can be examined in other K–12 school districts and LEAs with varied characteristics by making changes to suit the local sociocultural contexts. Additionally, the framework's feasibility in preschool settings, as well as in service provision for infants and other children aged 0 to 5 years, can be investigated.

Universities and other postsecondary institutions are not governed by the IDEA (2004). Instead, disabled students on college campuses are protected by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Although certain adjustments would be required, the approaches and strategies outlined in this *Inclusive by Design* framework may prove useful for designing syllabi, curricula, and instructional and assessment practices on college campuses. As I noted throughout the dissertation, inclusion is more than an academic endeavor. Without change, the barriers that are made visible herein will continue to disable students from participating alongside their peers. Understanding how to dismantle these barriers and make inclusive experiences a reality for all students is an important future research direction.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The research involved various stakeholders at the school district, including parents, teachers, paraeducators, and administrators. However, student voices were not included. Many data excerpts discussed students but not from the students' perspective. Instead, they were from the vantage of my institutional role or that of the parents, teachers, or staff members. All these viewpoints are important and representative, but it would be impactful for future research to also include student voices.

My position as an insider allowed me to discern the subtle complexities that played out and to witness and identify patterns and themes but inevitably made it harder to always be objective. A palpable tension resulted from the conflicts between my role as a participant and my role as an observer, such as during instances when finances rather than academic best practices drove decisions. The NEUSD and its actors may have considered these decisions to be practical but, because I straddled both worlds, I was conflicted as to which stance I should take as a researcher and an institutional actor.

Conclusion

Within this study, I make visible many instances when educators challenge the deficit perspectives and design normalizing solutions. These educators display a keen understanding of the multiple ways in which society marginalizes disabled students. Choosing instead to operate from an understanding of strengths, they apply an asset-based pedagogy. They examine ways in which the environment is disabling and how to intervene therein to make it an enabling environment.

Policies around how different programs are configured and criteria students need to meet for placement in the programs were encoded in the documents I analyzed. Requirements for students to be classified as mild–moderate, moderate, moderate–severe, or any such classification are based on state policy for credentialling teachers but actually determined by school-district personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators). An administrator saying that a student with an IQ of 70 should be placed in a moderate segregated setting or basing a disabled student's continued eligibility for a spot in general education on the volume or type of work the student completes are examples of how established institutional practices (touted as policies) frame arguments that veer towards exclusion (Artiles et al., 2011).

Inclusive systems provide better quality education for all children and are instrumental in shifting discriminatory attitudes. Children's relationships with the world outside of their immediate family develop predominantly in school contexts. Schools form the basis for later relationships and social interactions. Where children of diverse backgrounds and abilities play, socialize, and learn together becomes fertile ground for respect and understanding to grow and thrive. Likewise, where educational settings exclude and segregate, discriminatory attitudes are perpetuated. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life.

Some scholars believe inclusion is a civil right and that the LRE is the general education classroom. Advocates for inclusion espouse that there are different kinds of learners, and that society should embrace this diversity of learning, being, thinking, and doing. Clearly, it is important to frame disability as socially constructed. By advocating this notion, I do not deny biological aspects of impaired function. Impairments can have physical or neurological

manifestations, but “disability” is what society creates as barriers as a result of an impairment. By articulating the theoretical principles as underpinnings for my conceptual framework, I center disabled students as knowledge generators who exemplify what we can uncover if we imagine disability as a social construct at the intersection of the individual and the environment. It has material realities, as well as a political identity rooted in resistance (Annamma, 2017; Annamma et al., 2013).

This dissertation provides a research-proven framework for design and implementation of inclusive programming in K–12 settings. The hope is that work such as this can be used to forcefully reconceptualize disability towards social, cultural, historical, and intersectional understandings and recognize that, in addition to being an academic endeavor, this is a project rooted in politics and activism.

Inclusion implies that people are welcome, that each person reaches out to include another. It speaks to relationships. Inclusion differs from the “letting in” or “adding on” done in the past. Instead, it conveys the idea that we appreciate each other, see each other’s gifts, and value being together. Inclusion should not be the “foreign country” that Hartley (1954, p. 3) called the past. Instead, it is time to “do things differently.”

References

Abell, M. M., Jung, E., & Taylor, M. (2011). Students' perceptions of classroom instructional environments in the context of "universal design for learning." *Learning Environments Research, 14*(2), Article 171. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-011-9090-2

Ainscow, M. (2005). Understanding the development of inclusive education system. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, *3*, 5–20.

Al-Azawei, A., Serenelli, F., & Lundqvist, K. (2016). Universal design for learning (UDL): A content analysis of peer reviewed journals from 2012 to 2015. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 16*(3), 39–56. https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v16i3.19295

Albinger, P. (1995). Stories from the resource room: Piano lessons, imaginary illness, and broken-down cars. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *28*, 615–621. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002221949502801003

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596.

American Test Anxieties Association. (n.d.). *Text anxiety*. http://amtaa.org/

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.* (1990). https:/www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm

Annamma, S. A. (2017). The pedagogy of pathologization: Dis/abled girls of color in the school–prison nexus. Routledge.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*, 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511

Artiles, A. J., & Kozleski, E. B. (2007). Beyond convictions: Interrogating culture, history, and power in inclusive education. *Language Arts*, *84*, 357–364.

Artiles, A. J., & Kozleski, E. B. (2010). What counts as response and intervention in RTI? A sociocultural analysis. *Psicothema*, *22*(4), 949–954.

Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E. B., & Waitoller, F. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Inclusive education: Examining equity in five continents.* Harvard Education Press.

Assistive Technology Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-394 (1998). https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ394/PLAW-105publ394.pdf

Auerbach, C., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis* (Vol. 21). New York University Press.

Baglieri, S., Valle, J. W., Connor, D. J., & Gallagher, D. J. (2011). Disability studies in education: The need for a plurality of perspectives on disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, *32*, 267–278. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741932510362200

Baker, E. T., Wang, M., & Wahlberg, H. (1995). The effects of inclusion on learning. *Educational Leadership*, *52*(4), 33–35.

Baker, J. M., & Zigmond, N. (1990). Are regular education classes equipped to accommodate students with learning disabilities? *Exceptional Children, 56,* 515–526. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299005600603

Baker, P., & Ellece, S. (2011). *Key terms in discourse analysis*. A & C Black.

Berg, J. L., & Wehby, J. (2013). Preteaching strategies to improve student learning in content area classes. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *49*(1), 14–20. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1053451213480029

Berne, P. (2008). Sins invalid: Disability, dancing, and claiming beauty. In R. Solinger, M. Fox, & K. Irani (Eds.), *Telling stories to change the world: Global voices on the power of narrative to build community and make social justice claims* (pp. 201–212). Routledge.

Beukelman, D. R., & Mirenda, P. (1998). *Augmentative and alternative communication.* Paul H. Brookes.

Bingham R. (2020). The disabled body under surveillance capitalism. *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.16995/c21.1770

Bogdan, R., & Kugelmass, J. (1984). Case studies of mainstreaming: A symbolic interactionist approach to special schooling. In R. Bodgan & S. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Special education and social interest*s. Routledge.

Booth, T. (1996). A perspective on inclusion from England. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*(1), 87–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764960260107

Browder, D. M., Mims, P. J., Spooner, F., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., & Lee, A. (2008). Teaching elementary students with multiple disabilities to participate in shared stories. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *33*(1–2), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.2511%2Frpsd.33.1-2.3

Brown, L., Farrington, K., Ziegler, M., Knight, T., & Ross, C. (1999). Fewer paraeducators and more teachers and therapists in educational programs for students with significant disabilities. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 24,* 249–252. https://doi.org/10.2511%2Frpsd.24.4.250

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/347us483

Bull, P. (2002). *Communication under the microscope: The theory and practice of microanalysis.* Routledge.

Buysse, V., Wesley, P. W., & Keyes, L. (1998). Implementing early childhood inclusion: Barrier and support factors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *13*(1), 169–184. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80031-3

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2020). *About the commission*. https://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/default

California Legislative Analyst's Office. (2019, November 18). *Overview of special education in California*. https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4110

Carlson, E., Daley, T., Shimshak, A., Riley, J., Keller, B., Jenkins, F., Markowitz, J., & Rosenquist, C. (2008). *Changes in the characteristics, services, and performance of preschoolers with disabilities from 2003-04 to 2004-05: Wave 2 overview report from the Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study (PEELS). NCSER 2008-3011.* National Center for Special Education Research. https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20083011/

CAST. (2018a). *UDL and the learning brain*. http:/www.cast.org/our-work/publications/2018/udl-learning-brain-neuroscience.html

CAST. (2018b). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2.* http://udlguidelines.cast.org

Causton-Theoharis, J., Theoharis, G., Bull, T., Cosier, M., & Dempf-Aldrich, K. (2011). Schools of promise: A school district–university partnership centered on inclusive school reform. *Remedial and Special Education*, *32*, 192–205. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741932510366163

Center for Universal Design. (2015). *About UD*. http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

Chaudhary, N., Hviid, P., Marsico, G., & Villadsen, J. (2017). *Resistance in everyday life: Constructing cultural experiences.* Springer.

Choi, H., McCart, A., & Sailor, W. (2020). Reshaping educational systems to realize the promise of inclusive education. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, *6*(1), 8–23. https://doi.org/10.32865/fire202061179

Cole, C. (2006). Closing the achievement gap series: Part III. What is the impact of NCLB on the inclusion of students with disabilities? *Education Policy Brief*, *4*(11), 1–12.

Cole, C. M., Waldron, N., & Majd, M. (2004). Academic progress of students across inclusive and traditional settings. *Mental Retardation*, *42*, 136–144. https://doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2004)42%3C136:APOSAI%3E2.0.CO;2

Community Alliance for Special Education. (2019). *Special education rights and responsibilities handbook (SERR)*. CASE. https://caseadvocacy.org/2019/10/14/at-last-the-new-special-education-rights-and-responsibilities-handbook-serr-is-here/

Cook, S. C., & Rao, K. (2018). Systematically applying UDL to effective practices for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *41*, 179–191. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0731948717749936

Cosier, M., Causton-Theoharis, J., & Theoharis, G. (2013). Does access matter? Time in general education and achievement for students with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, *34*, 323–332. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741932513485448

Cusumano, D. L., Algozzine, K., & Algozzine, B. (2014). Multi-tiered system of supports for effective inclusion in elementary schools. In J. McLeskey, N. L. Waldron, F. Spooner, & B. Algozzini (Eds.), *Handbook of effective inclusive schools: Research and practice* (pp. 197–209). Routledge.

Danforth, S. (Ed.). (2017). *Becoming a great inclusive educator*. Peter Lang.

Daniel, L. G., & King, D. A. (1997). Impact of inclusion education on academic achievement, student behavior and self-esteem, and parental attitudes. *Journal of Educational Research*, *91*, 67–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220679709597524

Daniels, G. S. (1952). *The "average man"?* Defense Technical Information Center. https://doi.org/10.21236/ad0010203

de Certeau, M., & Mayol, P. (1998). *The practice of everyday life: Living and cooking* (Vol. 2). University of Minnesota Press.

Dolmage, J. T. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. University of Michigan Press.

Dudley-Marling, C. (2004). The social construction of learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *37*, 482–489. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00222194040370060201

Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2013). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional communities at work*. Solution Tree Press.

Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.

Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Psychology Press.

Education Data Partnership. (2021). *2019–2020 school district financial data*. http://www.ed-data.org/article/New-on-Ed--Data

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Pub. L. No. 94-142 et seq (1975). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-89/pdf/STATUTE-89-Pg773.pdf

Edyburn, D. L. (2010). Would you recognize universal design for learning if you saw it? Ten propositions for new directions for the second decade of UDL. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *33*, 33–41. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F073194871003300103

Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Report*, *23*, 2850–2861. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3560

Engel, D. M. (1991). Law, culture, and children with disabilities: Educational rights and the construction of difference. *Duke Law Journal*, *1991*, 166–205.

Ferguson, P. M., & Nusbaum, E. (2012). Disability studies: What is it and what difference does it make? *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *37*, 70–80. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F154079691203700202

Fitzgerald, A. (2020). *Antiracism and universal design for learning:* Building expressways to Success. CAST.

Florian, L., Rose, R., & Tilstone, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Promoting inclusive practice*. Routledge.

Flugum, K. R., & Reschly, D. J. (1994). Prereferral interventions: Quality indices and outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, *32*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405(94)90025-6

Fryxell, D., & Kennedy, C. H. (1995). Placement along the continuum of services and its impact on students' social relationships. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, *20*, 259–269. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F154079699602000403

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1995). What's "special" about special education? *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*, 522.

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1998). Competing visions for educating students with disabilities inclusion versus full inclusion. *Childhood Education*, *74*, 309–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.1998.10521956

Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., Compton, D. L., Wehby, J., Schumacher, R. F., Gersten, R., & Jordan, N. C. (2015). Inclusion versus specialized intervention for very-low-performing students: What does access mean in an era of academic challenge? *Exceptional Children*, *81*, 134–157. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0014402914551743

Giangreco, M. F. (1993). *Choosing options and accommodations for children: A guide to planning inclusive education*. Paul H. Brookes.

Gilmour, A. F. (2018a, July 24). Has inclusion gone too far? Weighing its effects on students with disabilities, their peers, and teachers. *Education Next*. https://www.educationnext.org/has-inclusion-gone-too-far-weighing-effects-students-with-disabilities-peers-teachers/

Gilmour, A. F. (2018b, September 12). How can we improve special education without asking uncomfortable questions? *Education Next*. https://www.educationnext.org/how-can-we-improve-special-education-withouth-asking-uncomfortable-questions-response-better-question/

Gilmour, A. F., Fuchs, D., & Wehby, J. H. (2018). Are students with disabilities accessing the curriculum? A meta-analysis of the reading achievement gap between students with and without disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, *85*, 329–346. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0014402918795830

Glass, D., Meyer, A., & Rose, D. (2013). Universal design for learning and the arts. *Harvard Educational Review*, *83*, 98–119. https://doi/,org.10.17763/haer.83.1.33102p26478p54pw

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Pantheon.

Goffman, E. (1979). Footing. *Semiotica*, *25*(1–2), 1–30. https://philpapers.org/go.pl?id=GOFF&proxyId=&u=http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.1515%2Fsemi.1979.25.1-2.1

Guterman, B. R. (1995). The validity of categorical learning disabilities services: The consumer's view. *Exceptional Children*, *62*, 111–124. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440299506200202

Haber, S. (1964). *Efficiency and uplift: Scientific management in the progressive era, 1890-1920*. University of Chicago Press.

Hall, T. E., Cohen, N., Vue, G., & Ganley, P. (2015). Addressing learning disabilities with UDL and technology: Strategic reader. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *38*, 72–83. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0731948714544375

Hall, T. E., Meyer, A., & Rose, D. H. (Eds.). (2012). *Universal design for learning in the classroom: Practical applications*. Guilford Press.

Hanley, U. (2010). Teachers and curriculum change: Working to get it right. In M. Walshaw (Ed.), *Unpacking pedagogy: New perspectives for mathematics classrooms* (pp. 3–19). Information Age.

Hansen, N., Jordan, N. C., Fernandez, E., Siegler, R. S., Fuchs, L., Gersten, R., & Micklos, D. (2015). General and math-specific predictors of sixth-graders' knowledge of fractions. *Cognitive Development*, *35*, 34–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2015.02.001

Harry, B. (2008). Collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse families: Ideal versus reality. *Exceptional Children*, *74*, 372–388. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290807400306

Hart, J. E. (2009). Strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse students with special needs. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *53*, 197–208. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.53.3.197-208

Hartley, L. P. (1954). *The go-between*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Hehir, T. (2002). Eliminating ableism in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*, 1–33. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.1.03866528702g2105

Hehir, T., & Katzman, L. I. (2012). *Effective inclusive schools: Designing successful schoolwide programs*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hehir, T., Grindal, T., Freeman, B., Lamoreau, R., Borquaye, Y., & Burke, S. (2016). *A summary of the evidence on inclusive education*. Abt Associates.

Hirsh, S., & Hord, S. M. (2008). Leader & learner. *Principal Leadership*, *9*(4), 26–30.

Hollowood, T. M., Salisbury, C. L., Rainforth, B., & Palombaro, M. M. (1994). Use of instructional time in classrooms serving students with and without severe disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, *61*, 242–252. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440299506100304

Holmes, K. (2020). *Mismatch: How inclusion shapes design*. MIT Press.

Hunt, P., & Farron-Davis, F. (1992). A preliminary investigation of IEP quality and content associated with placement in general education versus special education classes. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, *17*, 247–253. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F154079699201700406

Hunt, P., Kozleski, E., Lee, J., Mortier, K., Fleming, D., Hicks, T., Balasubramanian, L., Leu, G., Bross, L. A., Munandar, V., Dunlap, K., Stepaniuk, I., Aramburo, C., & Oh, Y. (2020). Implementing comprehensive literacy instruction for students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. *Exceptional Children, 86,* 330–347. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0014402919880156

Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., Liboiron, N., & Bae, S. (2004). Collaborative teaming to support preschoolers with severe disabilities who are placed in general education early childhood programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24,* 123–142. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F02711214040240030101

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq*. (2004). https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/1400

Israel, M., Ribuffo, C., & Smith, S. (2014). *Universal design for learning innovation configuration: Recommendations for teacher preparation and professional development (Document No. IC-7)*. CEEDAR. https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/IC-7_FINAL_08-27-14.pdf

Jahoda, G. (2015). Quetelet and the emergence of the behavioral sciences. *SpringerPlus*, *4*(1), 473. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-015-1261-7

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2020). A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84*(1), Article 7120. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25,* 535–542. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.010

Jordan, N. C., Kaplan, D., Ramineni, C., & Locuniak, M. N. (2009). Early math matters: Kindergarten number competence and later mathematics outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 45,* 850–867. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0014939

Kanter, A., & Ferri, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Righting educational wrongs: Disability studies in law and education*. Syracuse University Press.

King-Sears, P. (2014). Introduction to *Learning Disability Quarterly* special series on universal design for learning: Part one of two. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 37(2), 68–70. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0731948714528337?journalCode=ldqa#

Kozleski, E. B. (2017). The uses of qualitative research: Powerful methods to inform evidence-based practice in education. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 42*(1), 19–32. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1540796916683710

Kozleski, E. B., & Artiles, A. J. (2012). Technical assistance as inquiry: Using activity theory methods to engage equity in educational practice communities. In S. Steinberg & G. Canella (Eds.), *Handbook on critical qualitative research* (pp. 431-445). Peter Lang.

Kozleski, E. B., Artiles, A. J., Fletcher, T., & Engelbrecht, P. (2009). Understanding the dialectics of the local and the global in education for all: A comparative case study. . *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies Journal, 2,* 15–29.

Kozleski, E., Artiles, A., & Waitoller, F. (2014). Equity in inclusive education: A cultural historical comparative perspective. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of special education* (Vol. 1, 2nd ed., pp. 231–250). Sage.

Kurth, J. A., Morningstar, M. E., Hicks, T. A., & Templin, J. (2018). Exploring the relationship between school transformation and inclusion: A Bayesian multilevel longitudinal analysis. *Inclusion, 6,* 19–32. https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-6.1.19

Lambert, C., Curran, C. M., Prigge, D. J., & Shorr, D. (2005). *Addressing inclusion in an era of education reform: Dispositions of secondary and elementary pre-service educators in the pipeline*. ERIC [No. ED 490026].

Lave, J. (1991). Situating learning in communities of practice. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley (Eds), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (pp. 63–82). American Psychological Association.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (2005). Practice, person, social world. In H. Daniels (Ed.), *An introduction to Vygotsky* (2nd ed., pp. 149156). Routledge.

Lazerson, M. (1983). The origins of special education. In J. G. Chambers & W. T. Hartman (Eds.), *Special education policies: Their history, implementation, and finance* (pp. 15–47). Temple University Press.

LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, 52, 31–60. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543052001031

Lieber, J., Beckman, P. J., Hanson, M. J., Janko, S., Marquart, J. M., Horn, E., & Odom, S. L. (1997). The impact of changing roles on relationships between professionals in inclusive programs for young children. *Early Education and Development, 8,* 67–82. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed0801_6

Lieber, J., Hanson, M. J., Beckman, P. J., Odom, S. L., Sandall, S. R., Schwartz, I. S., & Wolery, R. (2000). Key influences on the initiation and implementation of inclusive preschool programs. *Exceptional Children*, *67*, 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290006700106

Lindsay, G., & Dockrell, J. (2002). Meeting the needs of children with speech language and communication needs: a critical perspective on inclusion and collaboration. *Child Language and Teaching Therapy*, *18*, 91–101. https://doi.org/101191/0265659002ct229ed

Lindström, A., & Sorjonen, M. L. (2012). Affiliation in conversation. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 350–369). Wiley-Blackwell.

Marston, D. (2005). Tiers of intervention in responsiveness to intervention: Prevention outcomes and learning disabilities identification patterns. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *38*, 539–544. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00222194050380061001

McDonnell, J., Thorson, N., & McQuivey, C. (2000). Comparison of the instructional contexts of students with severe disabilities and their peers in general education classes. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, *25*, 54–58. https://doi.org/10.2511%2Frpsd.25.1.54

McDonnell, J., Thorson, N., Disher, S., Mathot-Buckner, C., Mendel, J., & Ray, L. (2003). The achievement of students with developmental disabilities and their peers without disabilities in inclusive settings: An exploratory study. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *26*, 224–236.

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., de Brey, C., Snyder, T., Wang, X., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Gebrekristos, S., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., Barmer, A., Bullock Mann, F., & Hinz, S. (2017). *The condition of education 2017 (NCES 2017- 144)*. U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017144.

McIntosh, R., Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., Hager, D., & Lee, O. (1993). Observations of students with learning disabilities in general education classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, *60*, 249–261. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440299406000306

McMaster, K. L., Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Research on peer-assisted learning strategies: The promise and limitations of peer-mediated instruction. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *22*, 5–25. https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.1080%2F10573560500203491

Meyer, L. H., Bevan-Brown, J., Park, H., & Savage, C. (1997). School inclusion and multicultural issues in special education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7th ed., pp. 334–360). John Wiley & Sons.

Molenbroek, J. F. M., & de Bruin, R. (2006). Anthropometry of a friendly rest room. *Assistive Technology*, *18*, 196–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400435.2006.10131918

Moore, S. (2017). *One without the other: Stories of unity through diversity and inclusion* (Vol. 1). Portage & Main Press.

Mortier, K. (2018). Communities of practice: A conceptual framework for inclusion of students with significant disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *24*, 329–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1461261

Mortier, K., Hunt, P., Desimpel, L., & Van Hove, G. (2012). Participatie van kinderen met een beperking en hun ouders in de realisatie van inclusief onderwijs [Participation of children with disabilities and their parents in the realization of inclusive education]. *Tijdschrift voor Orthopedagogiek*, *51*, 319–330.

Mortier, K., Hunt, P., Leroy, M., Van de Putte, I., & Van Hove, G. (2010). Communities of practice in inclusive education. *Educational Studies*, *36*, 345–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690903424816

Mountford, R. (2001). On gender and rhetorical space. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *31*, 41–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940109391194

Mulvihill, B. A., Shearer, D., & Van Horn, M. L. (2002). Training, experience, and child care providers' perceptions of inclusion. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *17*, 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(02)00145-X

National Center on Intensive Intervention. (2020). *Intensive intervention.* https://intensiveintervention.org/intensive-intervention

National Center on Universal Design for Learning. (n.d.). Universal design. *Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking & Technology*. https://www.washington.edu/doit/national-center-universal-design-learning

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI). (2011). *Research synthesis points on practices that support inclusion.* University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute. https://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/

Nolan, J., & McBride, M. (2015). Embodied semiosis: Autistic "stimming" as sensory praxis. In P. P. Trifonas (Ed.), *International handbook of semiotics* (pp. 1069–1078). Springer.

O'Brien, C. L., & O'Brien, J. (2000). *The origins of person-centered planning: A community of practice perspective.* (ED456599). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED456599

Ochs, E. (1988). *Culture and language development: Language acquisition and language socialization in a Samoan village* (Vol. 10). Cambridge University Press.

Odom, S. L. (2000). Preschool inclusion: What we know and where we go from here. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *20*, 20–27. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F027112140002000104

Odom, S. L., & Diamond, K. E. (1998). Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *13*, 3–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80023-4

Odom, S. L., Horn, E. M., Marquart, J., Hanson, M. J., Wolfberg, P., Beckman, P. J., Lieber J., Li, S., Schwartz, I., Janko, S., & Sandall, S. (1999). On the forms of inclusion: Organizational context and individualized service models. *Journal of Early Intervention*, *22*, 185–199. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F105381519902200301

Office of Special Education Programs. (2018). *Federal resources for stakeholders*. U.S. Department of Education. https://osepideasthatwork.org/node/175

Osgood, R. L. (2005). *The history of inclusion in United States*. Gallaudet University Press.

Padeliadu, S., & Zigmond, N. (1996). Perspectives of students with learning disabilities about special education placement. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, *11*, 15–23.

Peck, C. A., Hayden, L., Wandschneider, M., Peterson, K., & Richarz, S. (1989). Development of integrated preschools: A qualitative inquiry into sources of resistance among parents, administrators, and teachers. *Journal of Early Intervention*, *13*, 353–364. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F105381518901300407

Pollack, M. S., Shelton, A., Clancy, E., & Lemons, C. J. (2020). Sentence-level gist: Literacy instruction for students with learning disabilities in co-taught classrooms. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 56, 233–240. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1053451220944378

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shaped. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 210–228). Wiley-Blackwell.

Puranik, C. S., Petscher, Y., Otaiba, S. A., & Lemons, C. J. (2018). Improving kindergarten students' writing outcomes using peer-assisted strategies. *Elementary School Journal*, *118*, 680–710. https://doi.org/10.1086/697432

Purcell, M. L., Horn, E., & Palmer, S. (2007). A qualitative study of the initiation and continuation of preschool inclusion programs. *Exceptional Children*, *74*, 85–99. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290707400105

Pyle, D., Pyle, N., Lignugaris/Kraft, B., Duran, L., & Akers, J. (2017). Academic effects of peer-mediated interventions with English language learners: A research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*, 103–133. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0034654316653663

Rafferty, Y., Piscitelli, V., & Boettcher, C. (2003). The impact of inclusion on language development and social competence among preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, *69*, 467–479. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290306900405

Rao, K., Ok, M. W., & Bryant, B. R. (2014). A review of research on universal design educational models. *Remedial and Special Education*, *35*, 153–166. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741932513518980

Redmond, M. V. (2015). Face and politeness theories. *English Technical Reports and White Papers*, 2. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_reports/2

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701 *et seq.* (1973). https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/rehab/rehabilitation-act-of-1973-amended-by-wioa.pdf

Rose, D. H., & Gravel, J. W. (2009). Getting from here to there: UDL, global positioning systems, and lessons for improving education. In D. T. Gordon, J. W. Gravel, & L. A. Schifter (Eds.), *A policy reader in universal design for learning* (pp. 5-18). Harvard Education Press.

Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rose, D. H., Robinson, K. H., Hall, T. E., Coyne, P., Jackson, R. M., Stahl, W. M., & Wilcauskas, S. L. (2018). Accurate and informative for all: Universal design for learning (UDL) and the future of assessment. In S. N. Elliott, R. J. Kettler, & P. A. Beddow (Eds.), *Handbook of accessible instruction and testing practices* (pp. 167–180). Springer.

Rose, T. (2016). *The end of average: How to succeed in a world that values sameness*. Penguin UK.

Rustemier, S. (2002). *Social and educational justice: The human rights framework for inclusion*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/soc-ed-justice.shtml

Sailor, W. (2015). Advances in schoolwide inclusive school reform. *Remedial and Special Education*, *36*, 94–99. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741932514555021

Sailor, W. (2017). Equity as a basis for inclusive educational systems change. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 41*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1017/jse.2016.12

Sailor, W., & Roger, B. (2005). Rethinking inclusion: Schoolwide applications. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *86*, 503–509. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F003172170508600707

Sailor, W., McCart, A. B., & Choi, J. H. (2018). Reconceptualizing inclusive education through multi-tiered system of support. *Inclusion*, *6*, 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-6.1.3

Saldaña, J. (2014). *Thinking qualitatively: Methods of mind*. Sage.

Schelly, C. L., Davies, P. L., & Spooner, C. L. (2011). Student perceptions of faculty implementation of universal design for learning. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, *24*, 17–30.

Schifter, L. A., & Hehir, T. (2018, September 12). The better question: How can we improve inclusive education? *Education Next.* https://www.educationnext.org/better-question-how-can-we-improve-inclusion-education-response-has-inclusion-gone-too-far/

Schumm, J. S., & Vaughn, S. (1991). Making adaptations for mainstreamed students: General classroom teachers' perspectives. *Remedial and Special Education*, *12*(4), 18–27. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F074193259101200404

Scully, P., & Howell, J. (2008). Using ritual and traditions to create classroom community for children, teachers, and parents. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *36*, 261–266. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-008-0279-7

Sebba, J., & Sachdev, D. (1997). *What works in inclusive education?* Barnardo's.

Siegler, R. S., Duncan, G. J., Davis-Kean, P. E., Duckworth, K., Claessens, A., Engel, M., Susperreguy, I., & Chen, M. (2012). Early predictors of high school mathematics achievement. *Psychological Science*, *23*, 691–697. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797612440101

Skrtic, T. M. (1987). *An organizational analysis of special education reform* (ED291177). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED291177

Skrtic, T. (1991). The special education paradox: Equity as the way to excellence. *Harvard Educational Review*, *61*, 148–207. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.61.2.0q702751580h0617

Skrtic, T. M. (1995). *Disability and democracy: Reconstructing (special) education for postmodernity*. Teachers College Press.

Smith, J. L. M., Sáez, L., & Doabler, C. T. (2016). Using explicit and systematic instruction to support working memory. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *48*, 275–281. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0040059916650633

Soderstrom, N. C., & Bjork, R. A. (2015). Learning versus performance: An integrative review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *10*, 176–199. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1745691615569000

Stahmer, A. C., & Ingersoll, B. (2004). Inclusive programming for toddlers with autism spectrum disorders: Outcomes from the children's toddler school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *6*, 67–82. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F10983007040060020201

Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1992). *Curriculum considerations in inclusive classrooms.* H. Brookes.

Stanovich, P. J., & Jordan, A. (1998). Canadian teachers' and principals' beliefs about inclusive education as predictors of effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms. *Elementary School Journal*, *98*, 221–238.

Staples, K. E., & Diliberto, J. A. (2010). Guidelines for successful parent involvement: Working with parents of students with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *42*(6), 58–63. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004005991004200607

Strain, P. S., & Bovey, E. H. (2011). Randomized, controlled trial of the LEAP model of early intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorders. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *31*, 133–154. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0271121411408740

Strobel, W., Arthanat, S., Bauer, S., & Flagg, J. (2007). Universal design for learning: Critical need areas for people with learning disabilities. *Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits*, *4*(1), 81–98.

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2009). Responsiveness-to-intervention and school-wide positive behavior supports: Integration of multi-tiered system approaches. *Exceptionality*, *17*, 223–237. https://doi.org/10.1080/09362830903235375

Sunstein, B. S., & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2007). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research*. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Supporting Inclusive Practices. (2018). *Home*. https://www.sipinclusion.org

Swift Education Center. (2021). Resources. https://swiftschools.org/

Thorndike, E. L. (1911). *Individuality*. Houghton Mifflin.

Toole, J. C., & Louis, K. S. (2002). The role of professional learning communities in international education. In K. Leithwood, G. C. Furman, K. Riley, J. MacBeath, P. Gronn, & B. Mulford (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (Vol. 8, pp. 245–279). Springer.

Turnbull, H. R., Turnbull, A. P., Stowe, M., & Huerta, N. (2007). *Free appropriate public education: The law and students with disabilities*. Love.

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education: adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education; Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994*. https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

United Nations. (n.d.). *Factsheet on persons with disabilities*. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2008). *United Nations Conventions for the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Article 24*. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *A blueprint for reform: The reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education act*. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Policy statement on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs*. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf

Van der Klift, E., & Kunc, N. (2017). Ability and opportunity in the rearview mirror. In K. Scorgie & D. Sobsey (Eds.), *Working with families for inclusive education* (pp. 3–10). Emerald.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1985). *Handbook of discourse analysis*. Academic Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1996). Discourse, power and access. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp. 84–104). Routledge.

Villa, R. A., & Thousand, J. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Creating an inclusive school*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Levine, P., & Garza, N. (2006). *An overview of findings from wave 2 of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2): NCSER 2006-3004.* National Center for Special Education Research. https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pdf/20063004.pdf

Waldron, N. L., & McLeskey, J. (1998). The effects of an inclusive school program on students with mild and severe learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64*, 395–405. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440299806400308

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity.* Cambridge University Press.

Westheimer, J. (1999). Communities and consequences: An inquiry into ideology and practice in teachers' professional work. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 35*, 71–105. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00131619921968473

Yell, M. L., & Bateman, D. F. (2017). Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017) FAPE and the U.S. Supreme Court. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 50*(1), 7–15. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0040059917721116

Appendix: Service Delivery Model: Inclusive Design

Balasubramanian 20-21

Service Delivery: Inclusive Supports

Provision of Inclusive Supports involves the following steps

- Inclusive Design
- Universal Access Tools
- Making Adaptations
- Provision of Specialized Academic Instruction

Inclusive Design: This step involves co panning between the GE and SPED staff to ensure optimal access for all students.

- Weekly co planning between GE and SPED staff
- Share weekly plans, activities and materials
- Meet using video conferencing or a shared google doc / slides for easy collaboration
- Discuss co teaching opportunities like small group instruction, pre teaching, team teaching, para educator support options.
- Divide materials preparation activities

Universal Access tools: These are tools that should be part of all lessons, activities or materials. That way we do not have to plan for these as accommodations. These are like the "curb cuts" that we see in our neighborhoods. Do we think of these as accommodations for the disabled? Or something we all use at different times as needed.

- Reading texts: Digital adaptations - audio and video with enlarged text and annotations
- Writing: speech to text and text to speech
- For response: video, podcast or audio recording and writing response
- Instructional Slides shared with student before class

Adapting Materials: The next step involves examining what specific adaptations are needed for students to access and participate meaningfully. A recommended framework to create adaptations is the ADAPT framework (Bryant et.al., 2019)

Balasubramanian 20-21

ADAPT Framework

- A Ask, "What am I requiring the student to do?"
- D Determine the prerequisite skills of the task.
- A Analyze the student's strengths and struggles.
- P Propose and implement adaptations from among the four categories.
- T Test to determine whether the adaptations helped the student accomplish the task.

When proposing and implementing adaptations, these are the four categories to consider: ***materials, content, activity and instructional delivery***

Examples of adaptations:

- Video overview of assignment (M)
- Reduced work / modified work (A or C)
- Short instructional videos (ID)
- Alternate response formats such as audio, video or written (A)
- Graphic organizers (M)
- Quizlet / Vocabulary flashcards / Boom cards (M)
- Screencast / Video of scaffolds for desired work output
- Pre reading and / or Post reading video

Direct Service of Specialized Academic Instruction

When delivering specialized academics instruction in a small group or one to one setting, these are some recommended evidence-based strategies that can be utilized.

- Explicit and Systematic Instruction
- Pre teaching
- Getting the gist
- Vocabulary instruction