

Spring 2019

Increasing Self-Efficacy in Providing Inclusive Practices to Students with Diverse Learning Needs

Teresa K. Nagy
Governors State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opus.govst.edu/capstones>

 Part of the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nagy, Teresa K., "Increasing Self-Efficacy in Providing Inclusive Practices to Students with Diverse Learning Needs" (2019). *All Capstone Projects*. 372.
<https://opus.govst.edu/capstones/372>

For more information about the academic degree, extended learning, and certificate programs of Governors State University, go to http://www.govst.edu/Academics/Degree_Programs_and_Certifications/

Visit the [Governors State Education Department](#)

This Project Summary is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Capstone Projects at OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. For more information, please contact opus@govst.edu.

INCREASING SELF-EFFICACY

Increasing Self-Efficacy in Providing
Inclusive Practices to
Students with Diverse Learning Needs

By

Teresa (T-Kay) Nagy

CAPSTONE

For the Degree of Doctorate of Education, Ed.D.
Interdisciplinary Leadership, Superintendent Concentration

Governors State University

Summer 2019

Capstone Committee

Dr. Marlon Cummings, Chair

Dr. John Cook

Dr. Sandra Mickles

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was designed to determine if teachers in an elementary school in South Suburban School District in Chicago, Illinois increased their self-efficacy as it relates to serving students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment after receiving professional development. The study began with a historical review of students with disabilities and the current requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Reauthorization Act of 2004. Educational systems within the United States are required to provide services to students with diverse learning needs in the least restrictive environment. These supports are most commonly referred to as inclusive practices. Research indicates that teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes towards inclusion, and professional development play a significant role in the effectiveness of districts' mandated requirement of inclusion. The school district's administrative team determined that a study should be conducted to determine if weekly professional development increases the likelihood that educators felt equipped to service students with disabilities using inclusionary practices. Professional development was provided to all staff at Mary Elementary School. Interviews were conducted with a systematic selection of teaching staff members. Implications for future district improvement plans were delineated from the data received during the interviews.

Keywords: special education, inclusion, self-efficacy, professional development, teachers' attitudes

Acknowledgements

Through God all things can be accomplished! By His grace, was I able to overcome the grief associated with the loss of my mother, former husband, father-in-law, and secretary during this doctoral program and accomplish the necessary requirements of this capstone project.

I want to express my gratitude to my daughters who patiently supported and encouraged me throughout this endeavor. Without their understanding of countless hours away from home and when at home engaged in requirements of this research, I would not have successfully completed this study. Monica and Michelle are truly my inspiration to continue to reach new plateaus of education and within my chosen career path.

A special acknowledgement of gratitude to my new gift of love, Eddie. Without his endless attempts to keep me focused and filled with laughter at all the right moments, I may have lost my determination to complete this task. His consistent reminders that I could effectively balance being a mother, wife, principal, and scholar were always provided at exactly the right moment in time. Thank you for giving me the motivation precisely when I needed it the most.

Additionally, expressions of gratitude must be attributed to Tracey Redmond, my assistant principal, staff, church members, friends, and Chief Lawson who encouraged me and provided support as I completed this study.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I want to provide an overwhelming indebtedness of my capstone committee: Dr. Marlon Cummings, Dr. John Cook, and Dr. Sandra Mickles. Their guidance and support were immeasurable. The emails, texts, and phone call check-ins of Dr. Cummings and Dr. Cook kept me focused on outcomes and expectations for fulfillment. Dr. Cummings' overwhelming patience of my balancing act and life circumstances will never be forgotten!

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
List of Tables and Figures.....	vii
CHAPTER I: Background and Introduction.....	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Background of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	8
Summary	8
CHAPTER II: Literature Review.....	11
Defining Disabilities.....	11
Current Legislation for Educating Students with Disabilities.....	11
Defining Academic Student Outcomes	15
Description of Inclusionary Practices.....	17
Theoretical Framework for Research Study.....	20
Putting the Pieces Together for an Enactive Source	22
Professional Development Relating to Inclusive Practices	23
Educator’s Perception of Self-Efficacy	25
Attitudes of Teachers Regarding Inclusive Practices.....	28
Summary	29
CHAPTER III: Methodology.....	32
Introduction.....	32

Research Design..... 32

Overview of South Suburban School District of Chicago 34

District Performance..... 36

The Pilot School..... 38

Academic Performance Data for Mary Elementary School..... 38

Participants 39

Data Collection Instruments..... 39

Data Collection and Procedures 40

Data Analysis 42

Ethical Concerns 42

Limitations 43

Chapter IV: Findings..... 44

Introduction 44

Results..... 44

The Educator Role in the District..... 44

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Before Inclusion Workshops 47

Self-Efficacy Before Collaboration Workshop 48

Self-Efficacy of ELA Inclusive Strategies Before Workshop..... 49

Self-Efficacy of Mathematical Inclusive Strategies Before Workshop 51

Self-Efficacy of Behavioral Strategies Before Workshop..... 53

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Following Inclusion Workshops..... 56

Self-Efficacy of ELA Inclusive Strategies after Workshop 58

Self-Efficacy of Math Inclusive Strategies after Workshop..... 60

Self-Efficacy of Behavioral Strategies after Workshop	62
Suggestions for Improving Inclusive Practices	65
Summary	67
Chapter V: Discussion	72
Call for Theory into Action	72
Discussion of Results	73
Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before Collaboration Workshop	73
Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before ELA Workshop	74
Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before Mathematical Workshop	76
Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before the Behavioral Workshop.....	78
Implications Following Workshops to Increase Inclusive Practices	81
Discussion of Suggestions for Improving Inclusive Practices	82
Summary of Discussion Implications.....	86
Recommendations	89
Conclusion.....	92
References.....	95
Appendix A.....	103

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. IDEA Versus Section 504.....	12
Figure 1. Categories of disabilities under IDEA, 2004. From Disability Awareness Presentation by Chicago Public Schools Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services.	13
Table 2. Least Restrictive Environment Continuum of Services.....	14
Table 3. Inclusive Strategies	17
Table 4. Descriptors of Participants.....	45
Table 5. Self-Efficacy Descriptors Before Inclusion Workshops.....	48
Table 6. Self-Efficacy Descriptors Following Workshops.....	57
Figure 2. Self-efficacy and putting the pieces together for district inclusive practices.....	93

CHAPTER I: Background and Introduction

That to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers and only removed when the use of supplemental services does not meet their needs. (IDEA, 2004)

Introduction

A, B, C, it's easy as 1, 2, 3! Ask anyone why he or she might go to school, and the answer always contains the proverbial—to learn to read, write, and do arithmetic. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life.” Jones (2012) wrote, “That for decades the goals of education have been to prepare children for citizenship, cultivate a skilled workforce, teach cultural literacy, help students become critical thinkers, and help students compete in a global marketplace.” Beyond any other determining factor (cognitive abilities, budget, class size, etc.) in the predictor of students’ performance on these objectives is the teacher (Hattie, 2009; Mahler, GroBschedl, & Harms, 2018). Vaughn and Bos (2012) explained in greater detail the role of the teacher: “The role of the teacher is that of an educational technician who engineers instruction and arranges the environment so that the probability of learning is increased.” (p.18) These goals of education are the aim for all students, including those identified as having special needs.

Including students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate has been a topic of great debate for decades; not only in the realm of education, but also in the courts, amongst the general public, and within legislative expectancies. Inclusionary instructional practices are currently required under federal legislation known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), but districts throughout the United States are experiencing mixed results (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007). According to Frumos (2018),

inclusion is defined as more than just placing students with disabilities in the general education setting, but rather the process of educating those students in their least restrictive setting.

Inclusionary practice “implies that students are more alike than different and that all students should be welcomed members of their learning communities, just as all individuals should have those rights in a larger society” (Friend & Bursuck, 2019, p. 18).

Statement of the Problem

Meeting the requirements of IDEA within school districts requires a myriad of interconnected beliefs, expectations, and training to be successful (Bourke, 2014; Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Cook, 2001; Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Imbimbo & Knopf, 2009; Moreno, Jaen, Navio, & Moreno, 2015; Sweigart & Collins, 2017; Vaz, et al. 2015). Research indicates that school districts throughout the United States and developing countries are experiencing a variety of results relating to the implementation of inclusionary practices (Cook et al., 2007). Signor-Buhl, Leblanc, and McDougal (2006) concluded that interpretation of inclusive research within itself is difficult due to differences in models of inclusion and corresponding implementation of a variety of instructional methods used by educators. However, an examination of current research does suggest an interconnectivity of teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion (Brady & Woolfson, 2008), their self-efficacy in implementing strategies of inclusive practices (Urton, Wilbdert, & Hennemann, 2014), and the knowledge an educator possesses (Vaz, et al., 2015). These relationships may directly influence the success of a school district’s inclusive plan for educating students with disabilities.

South Suburban School District in Chicago is one of the districts that is currently experiencing mixed results with their approach to inclusive practices. Students with disabilities are overwhelmingly still receiving a majority of their supports and services in a separate class

setting. The district administration has articulated that the least restrictive environment (LRE) should be the first consideration for servicing students with disabilities, yet individualized education plans (IEPs) are still being created with restrictive settings as the environment for teaching diverse learners.

When reviewing student outcomes, the district has referred to the results from standardized assessments, which have indicated that there is a significant discrepancy in attainment and growth performance between general and special education students. The South Suburban School District of Chicago concluded that the specified mandate of IDEA, for students with disabilities to be educated in their least restrictive environment or in other terms the use of inclusive practices is not being implemented with fidelity. Consequently, there is a need for the district to conduct an analysis of factors that might increase inclusive practices within the district and offer suggestions for improving implementation of inclusive practices.

Background of the Problem

Early definitions of inclusiveness focused merely on where a child was educated, and the practice of mainstreaming students was thought of as adequately meeting the needs of the disabled under current legislation. The practice of mainstreaming brought students into the general education setting but did little to ensure that supports and services were provided intentionally or effectively for the disabled child (Monje, 2017). Mainstreaming students rarely focused on the outcome of student achievement or on the social well-being of the students (Huberman, Navo, & Parish, 2012), emphasizing instead on the mere physical location of the child.

The 2004 Reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act requires students with disabilities be educated with their non-disabled peers not just in location, but also in such a way

that supports and services be brought to the student. These supports and services or inclusive practices have evolved over time to mean more than just receiving a portion of education in the general education setting to practices that are philosophically based on three dimensions: physical integration, social integration, and instructional integration (Friend & Bursuck, 2019). Implementing these underlying integrations requires school districts to design programming practices whereby all educators are required to meet the needs of the specific students that are serviced in their schools (Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012), ultimately requiring school districts to include students with an emphasis on abilities rather than on disabilities, which within itself is not easily achieved (Westling & Fox, 2009).

While educating students with disabilities in the general education setting has increased over the years, school districts nationwide are achieving varying rates of success (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). The National Board for Professional Teaching (2016) requires teachers that a) are committed to students and their learning, b) know the subject that you teach and how to teach those subjects to students, c) are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, d) think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and e) are members of learning communities. Danielson (2007) incorporated these standards along with empirical evidence and theoretical research into a framework for teaching comprised of four specific domains: a) planning and preparation, b) classroom environment, c) instruction, and d) professional responsibilities. The requirements or competencies in each of these domains is required regardless of the physical setting of the education or the students that are placed within the general or special education classroom. Couple these responsibilities with a legal obligation to meet the insistent and peremptory needs of diverse student populations in the general

education setting, and it is not surprising that districts report inconsistencies with inclusive practices.

The inconsistencies with inclusive practices are ultimately derived from the outcomes of student achievement. Learning is a dynamic process by which students play an active role. “Thus, learning is not merely the accumulation of knowledge and skills, but it is also the active construction and transformation of ideas based on observations and experiences.” (Vaughn & Bos, 2012, p. 18). Identifying how the accumulation of knowledge is presented in outcomes is an indicator of the successes or failures of the learning process in relationship to the framework of teaching.

Before the LRE mandate, students with disabilities were consistently exhibiting lower achievement in standardized assessments, showing little to no growth towards attainment. Friend and Bursuck (2019) contended that less exposure to grade level curriculum in a separate setting could have been a determining factor, whereas inclusive practices by their general premise provide opportunities to engage with non-disabled peers and experience instruction through grade level standards.

Inclusiveness is influenced by many factors, from the characteristics of the students being educated, to the preparation and skill of their teachers, to the amount of administrative support available. Because of this complexity, research regarding inclusive practices has been difficult to conduct, and the results have been mixed. (p. 20)

In spite of the difficulties relating to the complexity of inclusionary practices, there is significant research that indicates there are positive correlations that can be derived from students with diverse learning needs being placed in the general education setting. Freeman and Alkin (2000) conducted a synthesis of research findings relating to students with intellectual disabilities and

found significant evidence supporting positive academic and social outcomes when these students are included in the general education setting. Similar results examining early language development for students identified as being at high risk were noted by Justice, Petscher, Schatschneider, and Mashburn (2011), whereby peers with high skills impacted the achievement level of lower performing students. Also, there are not significant negative impacts on students with high skills through interaction of students demonstrating less language attainment before enrollment in preschool.

Signor-Buhl et al. (2006) concluded that significant research supports the benefits of students both socially and academically in districts utilizing inclusive practices. Luster and Durrett (2003) presented a state-wide study supportive of inclusion. Their research found that students with disabilities who participate in the general education setting graduate at a higher rate than students who are educated in separate setting. Additionally, Huberman et al. (2012) found positive academic results for students in districts with a strong commitment to utilizing inclusionary strategies along with collaborative practices. While positive results of inclusive practices have been identified through current research, “putting the pieces together” as Friend and Bursuck (2019, p. 21) refer to effective inclusionary practices, requires districts to carefully examine all of the intricate components that promote successful implementation.

Purpose of the Study

South Suburban School District of Chicago is one of the districts currently not achieving expected results in providing efficient inclusive practices to their diverse learner population. Based on current research that suggests a significant relationship between teacher attitudes, self-efficacy, and professional development pertaining to inclusive practices, South Suburban School

District of Chicago sought to gather relevant data to increase inclusive practices as they relate to research-based theories of teacher self-efficacy and professional development.

Professional development or professional learning as described by Adler (2000) is a process in which teachers increase their knowledge regarding pedagogy and services relating to the teaching profession. Current research indicates that conducting specifically designed professional development regarding special education law, disability awareness, instructional and behavioral techniques, and collaborating with stakeholders yields higher self-efficacy in teachers and positive outcomes in student achievement (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). In order to address the specified mandates of IDEA, teachers may require knowledge beyond typical pre-service teacher programming, even those considered to be of high quality (Peterson-Ahmad, Hovey, & Peak, 2018).

Bourke (2014) theorized that specific teacher training in “behavioral interventions classroom management and instructional strategies as a solution to addressing the quality of educational outcomes” (p. 11) for special needs students included in the general education setting. Additional findings from Bourke concluded that when educators are provided sufficient knowledge in the preceding areas, positive results are yielded for both children and teachers. Opportunities for acquiring knowledge of inclusionary strategies should be offered to all educators through professional development (Kaufman & Ring; 2011; Oakes et al. 2018; Peterson-Ahmad et al., 2018).

Evidence exists that educators distinctively learn and feel differently regarding specific aspects of the knowledge obtained through their professional learning experiences (Peterson-Ahmad et al., 2018), thus influencing their attitude towards inclusion as a result or in addition to their own self-efficacy to implement inclusive strategies. Through the design of this capstone

project, South Suburban School District of Chicago leadership team in conjunction with the researcher sought to gather data that would be utilized to increase the implementation of inclusive practices by those employed within the district.

Research Questions

This qualitative study aimed to gather information directly from participants through an interview protocol following professional development sessions. The main question and sub questions for this study were:

R1: In what ways does participating in professional development on inclusive practices increase the self-efficacy of implementation by staff?

S1: In what ways might an educator's attitude toward inclusion impact their self-efficacy?

S2: In what ways might previous experience impact an educator's self-efficacy?

S3: What role if any does the administration play in a teacher's self-efficacy?

Through an analysis of the data gathered from the participants, implications for districts to improve inclusive practices are provided.

Summary

Public education is designed to prepare all children to become effective citizens, critical thinkers, and achieve legitimate goals within their lifetime. Beyond any other factor predicting student outcomes on these objectives is the teacher. Current federal legislation known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004) mandates that students with disabilities be included with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate in order to achieve these expected outcomes. This mandate requires that supports and services are brought to the student in their least restrictive setting through inclusive practices that integrate physical, social, and

instructional practices that go beyond mainstreaming and are outcome based. Complying with this mandate can best be described through inclusionary practices.

Inclusive practices require a joint responsibility of general and special education teachers. Research indicates that collaborative efforts is necessary by all stakeholders to effectively integrate planning, instructing, creating a conducive environment for learning, and assessing students with diverse learning needs to meet expected student outcomes. Studies conducted yield that when inclusive practices are implemented with fidelity, positive student outcomes are achieved.

Signor-Buhl et al. (2006) recommended that school districts evaluate their district plans for servicing students with disabilities to determine if inclusive practices are meeting their intended levels of proficiency. South Suburban School District of Chicago conducted an evaluation of inclusive practices within the district through a review of student achievement and LRE placement for students with disabilities. Analysis of the data obtained concluded that students with disabilities were not achieving expected outcomes on standardized assessments and LRE placements in restrictive settings was consistently higher than in less restrictive settings. The evaluation of the data obtained by the district administration determined that Suburban School District of Chicago was not achieving adequate results with their inclusionary practices.

Concurrently, there is research regarding students with disabilities that indicates that there is substantial evidence surrounding teachers' knowledge of inclusive strategies, educator self-efficacy, and attitudes that directly impact the implementation of inclusive practices. Utilizing these theoretical findings, administration and this researcher sought to gather data specifically from one school in the district aimed at increasing the self-efficacy of the staff

regarding the implementation of inclusive practices, and in return the outcome of student achievement.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Educating students in their least restrictive environment requires the interconnectivity of knowledge regarding special education law, inclusive practices, and self-reflection. A review of literature was conducted to provide substantial background information of persons with disabilities, special education law, inclusive practices, defining student outcomes, findings relating to the effects of professional development, instructor self-efficacy, and attitudes of educators towards inclusion. This review sought to provide guidance for South Suburban School District in Chicago and implications for other districts in their pursuit of increasing implementation of inclusive practices.

Defining Disabilities

Educating students with disabilities has now become an integral expectation of public schools world-wide. Before discussing the education of students with disabilities, understanding how disabilities are defined under current legislation is a relevant topic for discussion.

According to the United States Department of Education's December 2016 Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the meaning of a person with a disability (also a student with a disability) can be established as an individual that has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Rights of individuals with disabilities are protected under federal law in the United States and most developed nations.

Current Legislation for Educating Students with Disabilities

Educational systems are required to review not only how a disability might impact or limit major life activities under current legislation known as IDEA for school districts, but also to determine how a disability may impact the outcomes of student learning. A person's disability is

protected from birth until death under Section 504 of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Educational systems utilize mandates designated in IDEA from age 3 until the day before a person’s 22nd birthday. Table 1 indicates the essential components of IDEA and Section 504.

Table 1

IDEA Versus Section 504

IDEA	Section 504
Funded Statute	Non-funding statue
14 specific disability categories	Mental or physical disability which substantially limits major life activity
Ages 3 – 21	Birth to death
All IDEA students are eligible under 504	Some section 504 students are not eligible under IDEA
Least Restrictive Environment	Educational setting
Eligibility - adversely affects learning	Eligibility - substantially limits major life activity
Free Appropriate Public Education - develop IEPs that are reasonably calculated to convey educational benefit	Free Appropriate Public Education - meet the needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met

The IDEA specifically identifies 13 disabilities for children between the ages of 3 and 21 (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Categories of disabilities under IDEA, 2004. From Disability Awareness Presentation by Chicago Public Schools Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services. (2014). Adapted with permission.

When a disability is identified for a student under IDEA, the reauthorization is aimed to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE). FAPE emphasizes special education and related services that are uniquely designed within an individualized education plan (IEP) that will prepare children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living. The legislation ensures that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected along with participation in the development of the plan.

IDEA also indicates that separate classes or separate schools should only be utilized when supports and services in the general education classroom do not meet the needs of the

student. The least restrictive environment should always be considered first. Table 2 details the continuum of services for educating students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment.

Table 2

Least Restrictive Environment Continuum of Services

First, consider services in a:

- General education classroom; teachers consult with each other
- General education classroom; accommodations and/or modifications
- General education classroom with specific instructional methods
- Co-teaching in the general educational setting

Before considering:

- Services in a separate class or removal from the general educational setting for up to 20% of the day
 - Services in a separate class - Removal for 21% to 60% of the day
 - Services in a separate school, residential placement, or homebound services
-

According to the 39th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2017, descriptions of students LRE provided the latest data collections which indicated that inclusive practices within the United States are evident. The report concluded that in 2015, there were a total of 5,737,952 students with disabilities ages six through 21 and 94.3% were serviced in the general education setting for at least a portion of their school day. Additionally, 62.7% of the students were educated in regular class settings for more than 80% of their school day. A total of 18.7% of students educated through IDEA were educated inside the general education setting for no less than 79% of the day. Only 5.2% of the students were educated solely in a separate classroom setting. Thus, the

information obtained indicated that public schools within the United States are educating students within the general education setting as mandated by IDEA. Yet, outcomes on student academic performance measurements remain inconsistent throughout public education systems.

Defining Academic Student Outcomes

Public schools in the United States are required to perform assessments that determine students' performance on a specified set of standards for education. Students with disabilities are expected to participate in both state and local assessments unless their IEP indicates otherwise. Students with specific learning disabilities, mild intellectual impairments, emotional disabilities, and other health impairments are typically expected to meet general education standards.

Currently, Illinois school districts are assessed according to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS began as an initiative in 2009 by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The goal was to create a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). According to Wallender (2014), there are four major justifications that formed the justification for creating the CCSS, which can be described as increasing rigor in schools, preparing students for college, creating common educational standards, and stressing quality education for all students. The Common Core State Standards are described as:

- a) Research and evidence based
- b) Clear, understandable, and consistent
- c) Aligned with college and career expectations
- d) Based on rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills
- e) Built upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards

- f) Informed by other top performing countries in order to prepare all students for success in our global economy and society (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016)

The 2015 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act known as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) expects that each state's education plan provides an assurance that challenging academic standards with no less than three levels of achievement be adopted. States are required to have standards in place for math, science, and ELA. These standards must be aligned to the requirements of entrance exams for higher education institutions and state career and technical standards. States can adopt alternate academic achievement standards for students with significant disabilities. Transition to new state plans began during the 2016-2017 school year and were expected for full implementation by the 2017-2018 school year (NCSL, n.d.).

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted the CCSS in 2010 with the expectation for full implementation across Illinois by 2013-2014. During the 2018 school year, ISBE facilitated an assessment system known as the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) through school year 2018. This online assessment contains real-world situations designed to provide feedback for educators on students' progress in mastering the CCSS in preparation for college and careers. Students with disabilities participate in PARCC assessments unless it was indicated within their IEPs that an alternate assessment tool was to be utilized.

School districts in Illinois are also required to assess students at a local level as well. South Suburban School District of Chicago selected Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) to meet this requirement. NWEA has created a series of assessments called MAP Growth that allows schools and districts to determine growth on CCSS over time and incorporates referenced

norms to establish proficiency on grade level materials (NWEA, 2019). Studies indicate that academic achievement performance of students with disabilities is more likely to increase when inclusive practices are implemented with fidelity (Huberman et al (2012).

Description of Inclusionary Practices

Considering the least restrictive environment as indicated by IDEA requires that school districts be mandated to develop coherent plans to provide inclusive practices that are designed to promote academic and social performance indicators. Inclusive practices include a variety of different approaches to servicing students in the general education setting. Understanding of these practices promotes clarity in what is expected under the LRE mandate. Table 3 provides a summary of these practices.

Table 3

Inclusive Strategies

Strategy	Definition
Consultation	Specialized problem-solving process in which one professional with particular expertise assists another professional or parent who needs the benefit of that expertise
Accommodations	Services or supports provided to help students gain full access to class content and instruction. Standards remain the same.
Modifications	Instructional or curricular changes that are made to alter the performance outcomes for students with challenges that are severe.

Table 3 continued

Strategy	Definition
Instructional Methods	The ways in which teachers present content or skills to students and evaluate whether learning has occurred.
Co-Teaching	Instructional approach in which two or more teachers or other certified staff share instruction for a single group of students within a single classroom setting.
Collaboration and Consultation	A style of interaction that professionals use in order to accomplish a goal they share.
Behavioral Strategies	Specifically designed interventions to assist challenged students with achieving appropriate behaviors including Behavior Intervention Plans

Note. Adapted from *Including Students with Special Needs: A practical guides for Classroom Teachers* (8th ed.), by Friend, M. & Bursuck, W. D., 2019, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

McLeskey and Waldron (2011) summarized current research relating to high quality instruction that produced significant progress for students with disabilities, especially for students with a learning disability. The researchers concluded that in addition to more instruction time in the general education setting, allowing access to expected standards of grade level standards, targeted instruction of high priority skills and concepts is necessary to achieve expected academic outcomes of growth and attainment as measured on standardized assessments. As described previously through national teaching standards, it is expected that only teachers with a high level of knowledge in decoding practice, behavior management, and in providing instruction that is explicit and engaging should be tasked with providing instruction to students, especially those with diverse learning needs. Additionally, best practices suggest that intentional grouping and progress monitoring of students should be incorporated into the

structure of instructional practices. McLeskey & Waldron (2011) further elaborated that inclusive practices in and of themselves should not be interpreted as full inclusion, but rather as intended to provide students with disabilities the best educational experience, and at times that may require some support in a separate classroom setting.

The Center for School Success Promising Practices Series: Special Education Inclusion (Imbimbo & Knopf, 2009) found a school in New York City that promotes the theory of bringing supports and services to the student to the maximum extent. The Children's School collaboratively services children with diverse learning needs and their non-disabled peers in the general education setting 100% of the day. The approach of instructional practices is child centered and strives to develop awareness and confirmation of strengths in all individuals. Extensive professional development is provided to all staff to meet the needs of required components of educating students with disabilities. Staff are trained in designing curriculum, assessment, planning, grading, instructional methods, collaborative practices, and team teaching.

Positive results on standardized assessments for the Children's School have indicated the success of a team-teaching model. More than 70% of the general education students have achieved a Level 3 or 4 in grades 3, 4, and 5 in ELA, and 12.7% of special education students reached the same level. Data analysis of standardized assessments has indicated that 73.8% of the general education students reached levels 3 and 4 on state assessments in mathematics, and results of special education students in the same grade showed that 19.3% reached the same level of competency.

While the percentages of students with disabilities meeting attainment have been relatively smaller than their non-disabled peers at the Children's School, it is important to note that these results indicate a significant increase of performance after enrolling in this unique

school. Implications can be derived from the positive data; inclusive practices when implemented within an ideal framework, serve as a model for districts everywhere. These implications are grounded by incorporating knowledge upfront for those serving students with disabilities in the general education setting through intensive professional development and ongoing support.

Additional studies on the effectiveness of inclusive practices have also yielded positive outcomes. Silverman, Hazelwood, and Cronin (2009) found that school districts with a commitment to inclusive practices result in higher achievement for their diverse learners. McLeskey and Waldon (2011) posited that regardless of the intensity of the disability, inclusiveness promoted a higher attainment of academic success. While research indicates correlations of inclusive practices and higher student achievement, the complexity and effectiveness of inclusiveness is “influenced by many factors,” and “research regarding inclusive practices has been difficult to conduct” (Friend & Bursuck, 2019, p. 19). While difficult to conduct, current research has accumulated supporting evidence of three interconnecting variables: professional development, teachers’ attitudes towards inclusiveness, and teachers’ self-efficacy.

Theoretical Framework for Research Study

IDEA mandates that the sole responsibility of educating students with disabilities is no longer placed on the special education teacher. An integrated approach of collaborative efforts of the special and general education teachers in the least restrictive environment is required, or in other words inclusiveness is expected. Friend and Bursuck (2019) referred to inclusive practices as “putting the pieces together” (p. 21). These pieces are integrated through examination of the physical environment, social well-being of the student, and the ability to carry out best practices

of instruction. Knowledge of each of piece and the ability to apply the knowledge into practice relies on specific professional learning and the reciprocal relationship of cognition, behavior, and environment (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015). The relationship just described is the premise for social cognitive theory.

Social cognitive theory emerged as a mechanism to explain why possession of knowledge and the ability to effectively execute actions by individuals cognizant of expected outcomes are not consistently aligned. Bandura (1982) explained this phenomenon: “People often do not behave optimally, even though they know full well what to do. This is because self-referent thought also mediates the relationship between knowledge and action.” (p. 122). Individuals learn through a combination of making sense of what they see and experience along with reacting to the conditions of their environment. Bandura (1982) concluded that there are four sources relating to an individual and their efficacy beliefs: affective states, social persuasion, vicarious learning, and enactive experiences, or mastery of intended outcomes.

Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) contended that enactive experiences may be the most powerful determinant of educator’s own efficacy belief. Performance of an educator is directly related to proficiency measurements of student outcomes.

School districts are an interactive social system that function as a result of interactions between educators, students, administrators, and community stakeholders. Further elaboration of social cognitive theory ascertains that educators’ perceptions of self and the organization as a whole directly influences teachers’ actions and student outcomes. This relationship is referred to as collective efficacy. Bandura (1982) explained that collective efficacy relates to the group’s ability as a whole to execute actions necessary to meet desired outcomes and that individuals can directly influence positive results. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) concluded that collective

efficacy stems from effects relating to the emotional tone of an organization, administrators' influence, social pressure, vicarious learning experiences, and mastery of expected outcomes. Goddard et al. (2015) summarized enactive experiences as "lived experience of individuals whereby the greater degree to which these experiences suggest individual or collective mastery (i.e., positive enactive experiences), the more likely according to social cognitive theory, efficacy beliefs will be strengthened." (p. 502).

Putting the Pieces Together for an Enactive Source

Kavale and Spaulding (2008) suggested that a comprehensive professional development program is essential to a school district's effectiveness with inclusive practices and teacher retention. Bourke (2014) found that educational staff are motivated to participate in professional learning "that they believe will address the issues they have with their student's learning," (p. 86). Alexander (2014) reported that teachers of students with diverse learning needs require professional development in differentiating instruction to meet the students' individualized needs. Oaks, et al (2018) found that a lack of preparation on the part of instructors in evidence-supported practices "may interfere with students' access to quality of instruction and interventions, and inclusive environments" (p. 534). Professional development may be required to put all of the pieces together.

Current research also suggests that possession of knowledge alone may not be sufficient enough in the practice of implementing inclusive practices for students with disabilities in the general education setting. Self-efficacy beliefs perceived by the educators may play an equally substantial role in the ability to implement inclusive practices. Educator self-efficacy is rooted in Bandura's (1982) theory that self-percepts of efficacy influence an individual's ability to carry out intended actions; in this case implementing inclusive practices with fidelity.

In addition to knowledge and educator efficacy, the general attitudes of teachers towards inclusion may also impact the ability to implement inclusive practices. Schillingford and Karlin (2014) determined that many educators acknowledge that they have a negative attitude towards including students with disabilities in the general education setting. More importantly, concluding that attitudes can be modified by providing comprehensive information relating to disabilities and exposure to diverse learners, indicating that district educators require specific knowledge in developing and implementing the services to provide students with disabilities FAPE in the LRE that best meets all of their educational needs.

Professional Development Relating to Inclusive Practices

Practices of inclusion exist throughout most school districts within developed and developing industrialized countries (Moreno et al., 2015), and are shown to be successful as evidenced in The Children's School in New York City and within research conducted by McLesky and Waldon (2011) and compilations of Silverman et al. (2009). Further examination of these works indicates that when educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge to effectively combine requirements of a sound teaching framework with the expectancies of inclusionary practices, the results produced are found to be more positive than in districts where teachers have indicated significantly less pedagogical knowledge of inclusive practices. Professional development or professional learning as described by Adler (2000) is a process in which teachers increase their knowledge regarding pedagogy and services relating to the teaching profession.

As previously mentioned, IDEA shifts the sole responsibility of educating students with disabilities from the special education teacher to a collaborative effort on the part of both general and special education teachers (Lee-Tarver, 2006). General educators often find themselves

lacking specific knowledge required to adequately maintain the necessary differentiation of instruction associated with the shifts in responsibilities (Alexander, 2014; Bourke, 2014; Manthey, 2007; Peterson-Ahmad et al. 2018). Alexander (2014) reported that teachers of students with diverse learning needs require professional development in differentiating instruction to meet the students' individualized needs. Oaks et al. (2018) found that a lack of preparation on the part of instructors in evidence-supported practices "may interfere with students' access to quality of instruction and interventions, and inclusive environments" (p. 534). School districts must create professional learning opportunities to fulfill these educator responsibilities.

Not only is the obvious indicator that general education teachers require continual professional learning opportunities relating to the requirements of educating students in their least restrictive environment, but empirical evidence supports the necessity of providing ongoing professional development to special education teachers as well. Presently, the United States faces a shortage of special education teachers due in large part to teacher attrition (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Approximately 29% of all teachers leave the profession within 3 years; special education teachers are 2.5 times more likely to exit the profession than their general education counterparts (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

When questioned about leaving, educators overwhelmingly indicate that districts fail to execute the necessary training to be fully equipped to handle the unique behavioral and academic needs of the twenty-first century student (Oaks et al., 2018). Bourke (2014) found that educational staff are motivated to participate in professional learning "that they believe will address the issues they have with their student's learning" (p. 86). Thus, supporting Kavale and

Spaulding's (2008) recommendation that a comprehensive professional development program is essential to a school district's effectiveness with inclusive practices and teacher retention.

Educator's Perception of Self-Efficacy

Evidence exists that educators distinctively learn and feel differently regarding specific aspects of the knowledge obtained through their professional learning experiences (Peterson-Ahmad et al., 2018). While teachers may have broad knowledge of expected practice, there appears to be a disconnection between research and application of instructional methods, especially when tasked with teaching the most challenging of students (Sweigart & Collins, 2017). This disconnect often results in teachers leaving the field of education altogether (Kaufman & Ring, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and advances the indication of another factor of equal or even greater importance relating to a teacher's ability to implement inclusive strategies.

In addition to professional development, current research also indicated another outlying factor to the ultimate success of inclusive practices for students with disabilities—a teacher's self-efficacy (Alexander, 2014; Bourke, 2014; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Cook, 2001; Cook et al., 2007; Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). Bandura (1982) explained, "Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations." (p. 122). Boyatzis and McKee (2005) concurred that self-efficacy is a person's own belief of what they can do, impact or control, further indicating, "Many psychologists believe that self-efficacy is one of the most important predictors of what people will actually do and how successful they will be in accomplishing their goals" (p. 166).

Vaz et al. (2015) defined self-efficacy in teaching as "the belief that one's teaching can influence how well students learn, including those that are unmotivated or demanding" (p. 3).

Olayiwola (2011) conducted specific research relating to teacher performance and self-efficacy and concluded that teacher efficacy accounts for 72.1% of the variance in job performance, further concluding that when high levels of self-efficacy are present in educators they are more motivated to perform the necessary instructional practices required to educate challenging students. Factors of resilience, commitment, and contentment with expected outcomes were also noted of educators with higher levels of self-efficacy according to. The results of these studies show a positive correlation between high self-efficacy and implementation of inclusive practices.

Self-efficacy was expounded upon by Vaz et al. (2015), “The importance of self-efficacy emerges from its cyclic nature, whereby proficiency in performance creates new mastery experience which in turn, influences self-efficacy beliefs.” (p. 2). Lack of self-efficacy may directly impact an educator’s ability to perform efficiently within the classroom setting. “A special education teacher who implements ineffective behavior management strategies may be overwhelmed by challenging student behavior, which is a significant contributor to teacher burnout leading to frustration and low self-efficacy” (Sweigart & Collins, 2017, p. 209).

Ross and Bruce (2007) found supporting evidence that educators reporting high levels of self-efficacy consistently produce increased levels of student attainment on performance tasks. The researchers attribute these results to the willingness to try creative strategies and enhanced behavioral management skills within their classroom environments, both of which correspond to greater results in overall student achievement, concluding that perceived self-efficacy of educators directly impact their implementation of inclusive practices.

Researchers have sought to determine educators’ self-efficacy pertaining to specific instructional tools designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Taylor, Ahlgrim-Delzell, and Flowers (2010) completed a qualitative study of teachers’ perceptions on

using explicit instruction curriculum to teach early reading skills to students with significant developmental disabilities. Their findings entailed details regarding an increase of educators' self-efficacy while also impacting student performance of print, phonics, word recognition, reading comprehension, and phonemic awareness. Drawing the conclusion that when appropriately designed and implemented tools are provided to educators to specifically meet the challenges of a diverse student population in their quest to meet standards aligned to the general education curriculum, positive student outcomes are achievable.

When reviewing strategies for inclusionary practices, collaboration and consultation are included among the list of approaches that align to obtaining significant positive results when educating students with diverse learning challenges. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) sought to determine if these approaches also increase teachers' self-efficacy. The researchers concluded that the degree of self-efficacy an educator possesses has direct implications relating to their instructional practices and their expectations for students. Furthermore, when consultation is consistently provided, general education teachers indicate an increase in perceived self-efficacy.

Beyond an individual's own self-efficacy, the collective efficacy of a school or district appears to be connected to an educator's perceived self-efficacy (Urton et al., 2014). Collective efficacy can be described as the belief that the organization as a whole, or a district's actions, or routines can meet a desired outcome. Goddard et al. (2015) concluded that positive outcomes of inclusive practices has a direct relationship to educators' perception of a school's collective efficacy. The researchers embedded their work in social cognitive theory and enactive experiences of teachers.

Attitudes of Teachers Regarding Inclusive Practices

The attitudes of teachers' regarding inclusive practices and students with disabilities also influences a district's success in program outcomes (Alexander, 2014; Moreno et al., 2015; Mulholland & Cumming, 2016). Attitudes can be visualized as constructs that are relatively stable and constituted through affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Mulholland & Cummings, 2016). According to Moreno et al. (2015):

Accommodating the individual time demands of students with disabilities without disadvantaging the other students in the classroom [involves] being apprehensive of the quality or quantity of work output of children with disabilities, lacking adequate support services, and limited training and competence in supporting inclusive educational practice (Moreno et al., 2015 p. 2).

Teacher efficacy is also associated with improvement in attitudes toward teaching in inclusive classrooms. In a comprehensive study of predicting teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, Sze (2009) concluded that teachers overall attitudes are related to their belief that they can influence student outcomes and have the power to make decisions that lead to student success. Alexander (2014) asserted that "student achievement is impacted by teachers' attitudes, because attitudes affect the expectation levels held by teachers" (p. 33). These studies indicate a relationship between educators' perceived self-efficacy and their attitudes towards instructional practices relating to the inclusion of diverse learners in the general education setting.

A study conducted by Monje (2017) indicated that the importance of general education teachers' attitudes on the application of inclusive practices. Monje found that there is difficulty in determining the exact perception due to differences in how districts define and implement inclusion. The research surmised that all districts regardless of differences in policies define

inclusive services as students receiving some portion of their educational experiences in the general educational setting based on each student's individual needs. Implications of the Monje study suggest that district policy decisions regarding inclusion and the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers should be based on direct questioning of the instructors that provide the services since 46% of the teaching staff expressed that they were not qualified to meet the demand of unique students they were responsible for servicing.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in Western Australia where the Commonwealth and state educational governments promote the goal of inclusion opportunities regardless of the disability are directly related to the performance and confidence of the teachers. The severity of the disability was found to also impact an instructor's belief directly in competency to carry out expected performance for teaching students with disabilities. Age, gender, teacher self-efficacy, and training were found to collectively account for 42% of the variability in teachers' attitudes towards inclusive practices, suggesting that similar to self-efficacy and in relationship to it teachers' attitudes are also influenced through enactive experiences (Vaz, et al, 2015).

Summary

The aim of any educational system is to produce productive citizens capable of achieving their maximum potential as they transition through adulthood, including students with disabilities. Increased accountability in overall student performance and federal mandates under the IDEA and Section 504 of the ADA have forced school districts to evaluate their comprehensive plans for servicing students with disabilities. Research indicates that providing supports and services in the least restrictive environment as required under IDEA, or through inclusive practices, have a positive correlation on diverse learners' academic achievement. Inclusive practices include accommodations, modifications, collaboration, consultation, co-

teaching, instructional and behavioral strategies. Putting all of the pieces together in order to achieve expected academic and social outcomes requires the connectivity of many factors.

Embedded within these many factors is Bandura's (1982) social cognitive theory, or processes relating to acquisition of knowledge and the execution of actions as measured through expected outcomes. Bandura concluded that beyond possession of knowledge relating to a person's ability to act upon their comprehension of skills, is the relationship that self-referent thought has on their ability to act. Efficacy is not a stable condition, but one that continuously changes based on a person's interaction with their environment. Efficacy beliefs are developed through four sources: social persuasion, vicarious learning, affective states, and enactive experiences or mastery of expected outcomes.

Relating to servicing students with disabilities, educator self-efficacy and collective efficacy of a school district are enactive by nature and begin with identifying a student's disability within the 14 possibilities, creating an IEP, determining the supports and services for that student, ensuring that the least restrictive environment is provided, planning and implementing instructional and behavioral strategies, and assessing the outcomes aligned to the standards for achievement. Knowledge of each component, effectiveness as measured through national teaching standards, and student performance outcomes on standardized assessments directly impacts the efficacy beliefs of an educator.

In addition to knowledge and belief of carrying out the intended action is an educator's attitude regarding inclusion in general. Research indicates that each component pertaining to an educator has a significant relationship on their ability to implement inclusive practices with fidelity for students with disabilities placed in the general education setting. A summation of the research relating to general and special education teachers' pedagogical practices indicates that

there is a correlation between the ability to implement inclusive practices and the knowledge of such practices. Findings show that when educators possess specific information relating to inclusive practices, they are in return more likely to implement the strategies within their classroom settings. Additionally, when educators are adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge, attrition rates decrease, and educators remain in their chosen profession. Thus, knowledge of pedagogy relating to inclusive practices impacts implementation of expected instructional strategies.

Conclusions relating to educator self-efficacy were found to have a direct correlation to implementation of inclusive practices. Research suggested that when a teacher believed that they were adequately equipped with the skills required of inclusive practices, implementation of the practices was increased. In addition, if educators saw positive results of their practice, their self-efficacy beliefs were identified as showing an increase; indicating that self-efficacy is cyclic in nature. Self-efficacy perceptions according to research directly impact implementation.

Lastly, the review of literature indicates a direct relationship between teacher attitudes regarding inclusion and their willingness to implement inclusive practices. Also relating to educator attitudes are findings that attitudes could be modified if educators are exposed to professional learning and students with diverse learning needs. Concluding that if districts are to be successful in implementing inclusive practices, educators must first believe that the students belong in the general education setting, acquire the necessary knowledge to implement inclusive strategies, and believe that their actions will directly influence expected social and academic outcomes.

CHAPTER III: Methodology

Introduction

IDEA requires that students that are identified as having a disability that negatively impacts their education receive an IEP. The IEP must consider the LRE as the placement for the supports and services. Bringing these supports and services to students with diverse learning needs in their LRE is now known as inclusionary practices. The effectiveness of inclusive practice is reliant on many extenuating factors. Current research indicates that self-efficacy of educators, their attitudes toward inclusion, and professional development are key indicators of district's results and positive student outcomes.

School districts throughout the United States have shown mixed results in their ability to effectively implement inclusive practices. Suburban School District of Chicago is one of the districts not exhibiting positive outcomes with inclusive practices. The district has hypothesized that teacher self-efficacy and the ability to carry out expected practices is directly related to the knowledge possessed by the educators relating to inclusionary practices. The district determined that selecting a school to pilot specific professional learning geared toward disability awareness, special education law, social and behavioral components, and instructional strategies will produce implications to develop a districtwide improvement plan for increasing effective inclusive practices within the district.

Research Design

A qualitative grounded theory design was chosen to answer the main research question: In what ways does participating in professional development on inclusive practices increase the self-efficacy of implementation by staff? According to Creswell (2012), grounded theory design allows for the examination of individuals that experienced a similar experience of action. Using

this approach allows the target population the opportunity to provide detailed responses through structured one-on-one interviews. Data from the interviews in this study were analyzed to generate information regarding the relationship between specifically designed professional development experiences and educators' perceived self-efficacy.

Professional development was provided to the entire staff at Mary Elementary School regarding special education law, disability awareness, and general inclusive practices. Additionally, four workshops were provided to educators during their common planning times on a bi-weekly basis during the months of April and May. Topics for professional development were based on research surrounding best practices and strategies for including students with disabilities in the general education setting. PowerPoint presentations and open-ended discussions were the format used by this researcher to delineate the information to the teaching staff. Topics and order of information provided to the educating staff were as follows:

1. Increasing Inclusive Practices through Collaboration
2. Increasing Inclusive Practice through English Language Arts Strategies
3. Increasing Inclusive Practices through Behavioral Strategies
4. Increasing Inclusive Practices through Mathematics Strategies

Following an Institutional Review Board (IRB) examination and approval for conducting research, a purposeful sampling of individuals that experienced the professional development series took place. At the conclusion of the last workshop, participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in a grounded research study. All participants were provided with a simple form asking if they would consider being interviewed to collect data regarding the professional development and their self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices. This researcher explained that anonymity of participants is an anticipated outcome of the research and

the actual name of the school and district would not be included in the formal study. Participants were asked to include their name and contact number if they indicated that they were interested in being considered in the research sampling. The forms were collected by a staff member in either a “Yes” envelope or a “No” envelope and returned to this researcher.

All “yes” responses were then numbered, and a systemized procedure was utilized to obtain six participants for interviews. Even numbered “yes” responses were chosen until six were obtained. This researcher then contacted the selected sampling members and determined a time and location that was not located on school grounds or during school hours to explain the research in greater detail, obtain consent, and conduct the recorded one on one interviews.

After a location and time was secured for the six participants, this researcher met with them individually and explained the entire research process. Upon completion of the signed consents, participants were asked open-ended, pre-determined questions, and from that moment on referred to as participants A through F instead of their actual names.

The interviews were audio recorded, and this researcher then transcribed the audio taping into written form. Each participant reviewed the written transcript to check for accuracy and to allow for further elaboration if the participant was inclined to do so.

Data obtained from the participants was sorted and analyzed according to responses to questions and current theoretical research. The data findings and analysis were summarized to provide schools and districts with implications regarding the development of comprehensive plans to increase inclusive practices and their expected outcomes.

Overview of South Suburban School District of Chicago

Suburban School District of Chicago currently services students within five grade schools. The mission of the district is, “To provide our students with an exceptional learning

experience that will empower them to become successful and fully productive citizens in an ever-changing global society” (Mission Statement, n.d.). The district has six essential core values:

- a) Excellence: We believe in creating a culture of excellence in which the whole child is challenged to achieve their greatest potential.
- b) Innovation: We believe in innovative educational opportunities that set the foundation for preparing our students to be lifelong learners who are college and career ready.
- c) Integrity: We believe in demonstrating and fostering trust by doing our work with integrity in an open and honest manner.
- d) Mutual Respect: We believe all voices are heard, valued, and can be expressed in a safe environment between Board of Education, administration, staff, students, parents, and community.
- e) Accountability: We believe in being accountable for our actions and decisions with respect to student achievement and fiscal responsibility.
- f) Partnership: We believe in creating an inclusive educational environment where we welcome and encourage the participation of every stakeholder to enhance the overall academic experience for our students.

Upon these foundational core values, South Suburban School District of Chicago recognizes the significance in promoting the highest standards possible in servicing all students academically and socially, including students with diverse learning needs.

Demographic information relating to South School District of Chicago according to the 2018 Illinois School Report Card is as follows: Student enrollment consist of 1,935 students of which are identified racially as White 2.5%; Black 83.3%; Hispanic 9.4%; Two or More Races

4.3%. There are currently 216 students or 11.2% with IEPs. There are 100 students identified as ELL or 5.2%. Students coming from a low-income household constitute 75.6% of the total student population, and 38 students are identified as being homeless. The district has an 11% mobility rate, and chronic absenteeism rate is 11.1%.

District information on teachers includes: 153 teachers with average years of experience equaling 12.5 years and the average salary for a teacher is \$54,917. Approximately 65% of the teachers hold a master's degree or above, the teacher retention rate is 83.6%, and the attendance rate of teachers is 98.3%.

District Performance

Students with disabilities in Suburban School District of Chicago were not meeting their expected growth or attainment targets on their 2018 NWEA End of the Year Assessments in comparison to their non-disabled peers. After examining the IEPs of the students, the district has hypothesized that a possible cause of the low performance may be the instructional setting of the students. More than 90% of the IEPs for students identified as having a disability indicate being instructed in more restrictive settings or separate classrooms from their non-disabled peers. Inclusive practices were not occurring, thus limiting the access of students with disabilities to grade level standards.

Performance on According to the Illinois School Report Card for 2018, South Suburban School District of Chicago is ranked 514 out of 771 school districts in Illinois. The overall district results indicate that there are 30% of the third through eighth grade students at or above proficiency in ELA, and 20% of these students at or above proficiency in mathematics. Eleven percent of the total student population in Suburban School District of Chicago are students with a disability. Results of their performance on the 2018 PARCC indicate that in math, 42% are

below, 35% indicate warning, 14% approaching, 8% at meet and 1% exceeds standards. For ELA students, 47% are below, 29% warning, 15% approaching, 8% meet, and 1% exceeds standards. Students with disabilities educated in Suburban School District of Chicago are experiencing an achievement gap in relation to their non-disabled peers.

As directed by IDEA, at least two assessments have been evaluated to determine that the rate of success of students with diverse learning needs is significantly less than that of their non-disabled peers. Additional requirements of the LRE mandate are minimal within Suburban School District of Chicago as delineated by the instructional settings of the students' IEPs. Currently, only two IEPs indicate co-teaching in the general education setting.

These aforementioned findings indicated a need to analyze specific data that may be relating to the lack of inclusive practices. Subsequently, research indicates that when educators express high levels of self-efficacy, they are more likely to believe that "the act of teaching is able to overcome the effects of outside influences and he or she can do what is needed to facilitate learning for all students, including those who do not learn easily." (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011, p. 322). Proposing an examination that coincides with current research to examine the premise that if educators participated in ongoing professional development would their self-efficacy increase along with positive attitudinal change as a result of increased knowledge of inclusive practices through the engagement in professional development? The district had sought to participate in a study designed to provide specific professional learning as it relates to inclusive practices for students with disabilities.

The Pilot School

The district selected Mary Elementary School (MES) staff to participate in receiving professional development to increase inclusive practices. The school was selected as the pilot school for the following reasons:

1. The superintendent, principal, and researcher all worked together at another school district
2. The willingness of the staff to engage in professional development
3. The school recently developed IEPs that contained co-teaching as one of their inclusive practices.

MES services students in grades kindergarten through fifth. There are currently 346 students enrolled within the school with 16.5% of them having been identified as having a disability. There are 255 students that are from low economic backgrounds. Racial backgrounds of the students include 92.5% Black, 2.9% White, and the remaining 4.6% did not answer the racial identity question on enrollment information. Chronic absenteeism accounts for 9.0%, and the school's mobility rate is higher than the district average with 13.4%.

Academic Performance Data for Mary Elementary School

Overall student performance on the PARCC indicated that 22% of the students have met the standards and 2% are exceeding. Students with disabilities results are as follows: for ELA, 55% are below, 24% warning, 3% approaching, 1% met, and 3% are exceeding standards. For math, 39% are below, 39% warning, 3% approaching, 18% met, and 0% exceed the standards. As previously mentioned, only two of these students are receiving their instruction through the inclusive practice of co-teaching. Analysis of student achievement data indicated that students with disabilities are performing significantly below their non-disabled peers, suggesting once

again that best practices for educating students with disabilities was not occurring within Mary Elementary School.

Participants

The staff of Mary Elementary School consists of 2 administrators, 15 general education teachers, 4 special education teachers and 8 paraprofessionals. All members of the staff received professional development regarding an overview of special education law, LRE mandate, disability awareness, and best practices in servicing diverse learners, including inclusive practices. Four subsequent workshops were provided to educators during their common planning time.

From the participants in these workshops, volunteers to participate in the qualitative research were requested through a simple questionnaire that asked the participants two questions of which they were asked to check their preferred response. The choices were “Yes, I am willing to participate in an interview regarding the inclusive practices professional development series.” “No, I am not interested in participating in an interview regarding the inclusive practices professional development.” Participants recorded their names and contact telephone numbers at the bottom of the forms if they were interested in participating in qualitative data gathering portion of the study. Forms indicating yes and no were separated and given to this researcher. A systematic sampling was utilized to obtain the targeted population for the interview process. Every second name was selected to engage in the interview until six volunteers were selected.

Data Collection Instruments

Participants were interviewed using a structured set of open-ended questions. Audio responses were recorded and then transcribed by this researcher. The target population’s

identifying information was removed from any recorded information and each participant was referred to as participants A through F.

Data Collection and Procedures

Specific professional development topics designed to close the gap between research and practices relating to servicing special education students in the general education setting were provided to educators at Mary Elementary School between April and May. After the targeted population was selected, each participant was contacted to determine an off-campus location and time during their non-duty hours to conduct the interview. Participants determined the location and time that would best work for their schedules and provided adequate privacy for the interview to be conducted.

Before the start of the interviews, written consent was obtained from each participant. During the informed consent obtainment, specific details of how the information was to be utilized, stored, and checked for accuracy was elaborated in detail for each participant. The targeted population also received information regarding any possible risk in participating in the qualitative study. The explanation that risk was minimal in that the only possible harm as a result of participation might be their identity becoming known to the district. All participants stated that they understood the summary of the study, their possible risk, and the implications that data obtained through the study may be shared with future researchers.

Interviews were conducted with the participants by asking each of them the following questions:

1. Are you a general education or special education teacher? Please elaborate on the LRE mandate from your professional role and collaborative practices before and after the workshops.

2. Describe in detail your self-efficacy prior to the workshop on ELA regarding your ability to implement inclusive strategies with fidelity for students with disabilities in the general education setting.
3. Following the workshop on ELA inclusive strategies, describe any changes that may have occurred in your self-efficacy to implement ELA strategies with fidelity for students with disabilities in the general education setting.
4. Describe in detail your self-efficacy prior to the workshop on mathematical inclusive strategies for servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting.
5. Following the workshop on mathematical inclusive strategies describe any changes that may have occurred in your self-efficacy to implement mathematical inclusive strategies with fidelity for students with disabilities in the general education setting.
6. Describe in detail your self-efficacy to implement behavioral strategies with fidelity prior to the workshop on behavioral strategies.
7. Describe any changes that may have occurred to your self-efficacy in implementing behavioral strategies to students with disabilities in the general education setting.
8. Describe any insight, future changes, or suggestions you may have to improve implementation of inclusive strategies within the district.

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by this researcher. This researcher shared the written transcripts with each of the participants to review for accuracy and offer any further elaborations or details to data obtained. Additional responses were added to the transcripts as provided by the participants.

Response data obtained and recorded from the participants were then analyzed. Results from the analysis served to provide recommendations to the district in the development of a plan to increase inclusive practices with South Suburban School District of Chicago.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred by reviewing the transcripts from the participant interviews. The recorded data was examined to determine if specific trends existed among responses from each of the six participants. Findings from the analysis were interpreted in relation to the central research question: In what ways does participating in professional development on inclusion practices increase the self-efficacy of implementation by staff?

Based on Bandura's constructs of social cognitive theory, which is embedded in the theoretical framework for this grounded qualitative study, trends occurred in relation to self-efficacy, attitudes, experience, collective-efficacy, and knowledge of inclusive practices. Additional analysis was performed to determine if information regarding collective efficacy existed that could be utilized to provide guiding principles or goals for districts in developing plans for increasing inclusive practices within their schools.

Ethical Concerns

All procedures regarding this study were provided up front to potential participants along with a consent document and assurance of anonymity through the development of non-identifying participant codes. Participants were provided with the detailed explanation of how the data collected from this study would help to guide future reform efforts within the district. An additional possible concern of ethics pertains to the previously established relationship between this researcher, superintendent, and principal of the selected school. This researcher was cognizant of potential bias in recording of questions and delivering of recorded responses to

ensure that anonymity of each participant would be sustained, and information was presented objectively, avoiding subjectivity due to established relationships.

Limitations

Specific limitations to this study may be imbedded in this researcher's role as the professional development provider. Certain bias may have presented itself to the overall outcome that professional development increases a teacher's self-efficacy in relation to the outcomes of the data analysis. Significant practice time to implement newly acquired skills may be limited due to the timing of the professional development in relation to the school calendar year. Additionally, there may have been limitations to the study due to the process of selecting participants. Underrepresentation of variables relating to sex, years of experience, race, and age may not have been accounted for, thus limiting the scope of the research for further implications relating to effectiveness of professional development as it relates to self and collective efficacy.

The time in which the study was conducted did not allow for actual implementation, thus prohibiting an integral component of self-efficacy—the mastery component of the enactive source. The data points collected were only able to address possible previous enactive sources — teachers' previous experiences and results, not current sources.

Subsequently, vicarious learning, affective states, and social persuasion as sources for self-efficacy were not examined in this study. While the enthusiasm of the presenter (this researcher) for inclusionary practice may have indirectly influenced the participants, this source was not examined. The only source of efficacy for data collection was the individual's perceived past and future mastery before and after the workshops.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

This chapter contains the results of this grounded qualitative study, which was designed to answer the main research question: In what ways does participating in professional development on inclusive practices increase the self-efficacy of implementation by staff? South Suburban School District of Chicago agreed to implement a professional development plan designed to increase inclusive practices in one of their schools, Mary Elementary School. Following the professional development, participants were asked if they were interested in participating in this study. Six participants were selected and interviewed. The data collected consisted of responses to a set of interview questions. Each question was specifically created to gather evidence of participants' belief in their ability or self-efficacy relating to inclusive practices before and after educators participated in a series of workshops. Participants were also requested to elaborate and share suggestions for future district reform efforts in providing inclusive practice to students with disabilities.

Results

The Educator Role in the District

Participant teachers were asked to share if their current role in the district was a general educator or a special education teacher. Educators were encouraged to elaborate on their response if there was additional information to share relating to the LRE mandate. All six of the participants in this study were general education teachers. They had various years of teaching experience. Their years of service ranged from first-year teacher to near retirement. The ages of the participants spanned from early thirties to early sixties. Both sexes were included in the interviews and participants identified as either African-American or Caucasian.

All participants serviced students that are ethnically and academically diverse within the school district. The participants expressed an understanding of special education law and agreement of the required mandate of least restrictive environment for students with disabilities.

Co-teaching involves the highest level of inclusive practice. Teachers need to have an understanding of content, strategies, and the ability to collaborate. Determining which participants had previous co-teaching experiences may have had direct implications on their responses of self-efficacy pertaining implementation of inclusive strategies. Table 4 summarizes information regarding the participants.

Table 4
Descriptors of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Attitude towards LRE Mandate	Race	Co-taught	PD in plan
A	Female	50-60	30	positive	African-American	No	yes
B	Male	30-35	2	positive	Caucasian	No	yes
C	Female	35-40	15	positive	African-American	No	yes
D	Male	30-35	1	positive	African-American	No	yes
E	Female	30-35	10	positive	African-American	yes	yes
F	Female	30-35	12	positive	Caucasian	yes	yes

Participant E expressed that experience as a co-teacher was one of the most rewarding experiences of their career.

I am so glad that I had the opportunity to be part of this professional development. One of my most rewarding experiences in teaching was when I was a co-teacher. I believe in

providing all students the best possible education with their peers. (personal communication, May 31, 2019)

Participant F elaborated on their teaching experience with South Chicago Suburban School District with positive memories and the goal to see students with disabilities in every classroom:

When Project Choices had a partnership with our school district, I was a co-teacher. The supports that were given to us made a world of difference. It was like having you around all of the time. I believe that all children can learn to their full potential and should be included. (personal communication, May 31, 2019)

Participants A, B, C, and D shared similar beliefs regarding servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting. Participant A provided personal assertions including disappointment that not all educators feel the same towards diverse learners as they do with general education students:

I believe that all students should have the same opportunities, but I have heard some teachers in our district come out and say, “Why does that child have to be in my classroom?” I hope that this professional development changed everyone’s attitude. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant B commented that the professional development series reinforced the current Master of Education program that they were finishing. “The professional development was aligned to what I am learning in my program and gave more suggestions on how to include students when you are the general education teacher” (personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participant C regarded the professional development series as a way for everyone to receive the same message:

As a general education teacher, it is important to understand why students should be included and how to support inclusion. The first session at the start of the school year had everyone in attendance and this was very important. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant D commented that as a first-year general education teacher, professional development is extremely vital to the success of the educator:

I am a first-year general education teacher. Past employment has shown me that including all students in opportunities is the right approach, but districts have to make sure that the educators are equipped with what is being asked of them through learning opportunities. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Responses from the participants indicated that 100% are in agreement that a professional learning series should be provided to staff that are expected to implement the mandate of including students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Before Inclusion Workshops

Participants were asked to rate their self-efficacy as either low, medium, or high before each of the workshops. Overall results relating to data findings of self-efficacy before inclusion workshops are summarized in Table 5 and further elaborated within each of the following sections.

Table 5

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Before Inclusion Workshops

Participants	Collaboration	ELA	Mathematics	Behavioral
A	Medium	Low	medium	high
B	Low	Low	low	low
C	Medium	Low	high	high
D	Low	Low	low	low
E	High	High	high	medium
F	High	High	high	high

Self-Efficacy Before Collaboration Workshop

Participants were asked to describe their self-efficacy in implementing collaborative practices before the workshop. Participants A and C indicated that they have a medium level of efficacy. Participant A shared that there should be more time to collaborate. “I have always liked to collaborate through my years of teaching on all aspects of teaching. My experiences have been that there isn’t always time to complete it well” (personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participant C explained that collaboration is important. “Collaboration is extremely important. A schedule to make sure that it occurs should be created” (personal communication, May 30, 2019). Participants B and D shared a low level of efficacy before the workshop. Participant D noted that there are many times that they wish collaboration time was always available. Each participant reported that as new teachers, time spent with other educators and related service providers would be an invaluable asset to teaching. Participant B elaborated, “When we work together as a team, I learn so much more” (personal communication, May 29,

2019). Participant D added, “If we had time to collaborate with the related service providers on social emotional aspects, I think that would definitely benefit the teachers and ultimately the students” (personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Participants E and F shared that their previous experiences as co-teachers and Project Choices impacted their self-efficacy. Participant F elaborated on previous experiences. “When we had the partnership with Project Choices, all members of the IEP team met beyond just the IEP meeting. We were able to plan for lessons, implementation strategies, and assessments” (personal communication, May 31, 2019). Participant E added, “One of the best parts of being a co-teacher was the opportunity to have regularly scheduled collaboration times in our schedule. This gave us the confidence that we were really providing what was best for the students with disabilities” (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

Responses to this question, provided insight that previous experiences for Participants E and F as co-teachers and their partnership Project Choices, an outside agency that worked with the district in providing guidance on best practices may have impacted their response of high efficacy before the workshop. On the hand, Participants B and D are beginning teachers and expressed low levels of efficacy.

Self-Efficacy of ELA Inclusive Strategies Before Workshop

Participants were asked to describe their self-efficacy in providing ELA inclusive practices to students with disabilities before the professional development workshop. Participants A, B, C, and D reported that they were not fully confident in their abilities to service students with diverse needs in the general education setting before the workshop. Participant B elaborated further and shared that the feedback that was received by administration was positive before the workshop. “But my own belief in my confidence does not necessarily match the

feedback that I have gotten” (personal communication, May 29, 2019). Participant C said that their previous career experience had only included servicing a high functioning student with autism:

His parents want him to be treated exactly like other students, which is the goal, but this is also a challenge. His needs are not the same. Providing what he needs may include treating him differently. Before the workshop, I had conflicting beliefs about how I was servicing him in the area of ELA (personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Participant D talked about an experience of self-doubt before the professional development session:

I am a first-year teacher and having the confidence in my abilities wasn't always there. I found ways to maneuver to meet their [students] needs by working with them one-on-one. In whole group, you have your objective for the day, and you teach it to everyone. Then while the students are working individually, I could work with my students with disabilities giving them the special attention that they required. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participants E and F responded differently than the preceding participants. Participant E shared that previous professional development and experiences resulted in high self-efficacy. “I was the inclusion teacher with Project Choices years ago, so I felt that my self-efficacy was strong with ELA strategies and practices” (personal communication, May 31, 2019). Participant F relayed a similar self-efficacy belief before the workshop that was provided:

Before this workshop, I felt that my self-efficacy was pretty strong in the area of ELA. My approaches in my opinion were on the right track. I had co-taught a number of years

ago. My inclusion teacher and I shared the same vision, which is very important (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

Both of these participants acknowledged receiving a substantial amount of previous training in servicing students with disabilities in the ELA setting. Each had been co-teachers in previous years within the school district. Their self-efficacy beliefs in providing ELA services before the workshops were described as being strong and confident. Each of these participants responded that the district's former training in ELA best practices had provided adequate strategies that enabled them to feel and proceed with instruction to all students, including those with diverse learning needs with a definitive growth mindset and the assurance of their pedagogical implementation.

Data collected regarding self-efficacy in implementing research-based strategies to students with disabilities in the area of ELA before the professional in-service showed mixed results. Participants A, B, C, and D expressed levels of lower self-efficacy than Participants E and F. Upon review of the collected responses, a probable indicator may be an educator's previous professional development and support in the area of implementing ELA strategies to students with diverse learning needs.

Self-Efficacy of Mathematical Inclusive Strategies Before Workshop

Participants were asked to describe their self-efficacy before their workshop on providing math inclusive strategies to students with disabilities in the general education setting. The responses were mixed regarding self-efficacy beliefs before the workshops. Participant A stated that their self-efficacy preceding the workshop was of competency. "In the area of mathematics, I was somewhat comfortable and confident" (personal communication, May 29, 2019). Participant B replied through an explanation that described the support and confidence that the

administration had habituated during formal and informal evaluations of instruction. While this participant had received positive feedback from administration regarding instructional practice in servicing diverse learners, the post observation discussions did not match their own belief in actual application of strategies. “The feedback that I get doesn’t necessarily match the confidence that I have in what I am doing. But as you know teachers are the harshest critics of themselves” (participant B, personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participant D provided a different response relating to self-efficacy and the feedback received during observations of instructional practice. Post observation discussions for this educator actually endorsed their belief in servicing diverse students:

As a first-year teacher, my self-efficacy was not as strong as it probably should be, but my past experiences helped me to know that I was on the right path. The feedback that I received from administration and other staff also encouraged me. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant C contemplated that their self-efficacy does not necessarily carry over into the children that are being educated at every given moment. The participant’s strong belief in their ability to proceed successfully in meeting the needs of diverse learners in the area of mathematical instruction does not guarantee the children’s self-efficacy in completing mathematical applications. Participant C said, “I love math. I have a math endorsement. Not all children love math. Making the connections is the most important thing in teaching math. I have to make connections for them to appreciate why specific skills are being taught” (personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Participant E asserted personal self-efficacy in providing inclusive practices in mathematics is strong. Previous experiences and professional development that had been

provided gives this participant confidence. “Before the math workshop, I would say that my self-efficacy was pretty confident. I had received professional support years ago in servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting” (participant E, personal communication, May 31, 2019).

Participant F described that positive results obtained in the area of mathematics assessment showed that the approaches being used were successfully implemented within classes with diverse learning requirements:

I was confident that my approaches were the right ones. I co-taught in the general education setting in previous years with a fantastic inclusion teacher. She and I planned many math lessons together and I still use those same strategies in my classes today.

(personal communication, May 31, 2019)

As with the data collected before the workshop in ELA, participants had mixed self-efficacy levels before professional development regarding mathematical strategies for servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting. Analysis of the data responses show that Participants A, C, E, and F ranged from somewhat confident to very confident. Shared responses from interviews with participant’s B and D’s self-efficacy were significantly lower than their participating colleagues. Subsequently, these differences in self-efficacy descriptions may be an indicator that prior professional learning may have impacted the responses of participants.

Self-Efficacy of Behavioral Strategies Before Workshop

The participants were asked how they would describe their self-efficacy relating to providing behavioral strategies to students with disabilities in the general education setting before the workshop. Responses were mixed to this question. Participant’s A, F, and C shared that they were confident before the workshop. Participant A described their self-efficacy as, “I

have always been confident with behavioral students. Principals always give me the students with behavior problems, so I must be implementing strategies with fidelity” (personal communication, May 29, 2019). Participant F specified with the following description, “Behavior problems are a challenge, patience is a priority. These children can challenge even the most experienced teacher’s abilities and self-efficacy. I always get the most challenging students, so I must be doing something right” (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

Participant C provided information regarding their current school year and confidence from a practice that is often used with challenging groups of students. At the close of the previous school year, the administration had shared the request that this participant loop with a particular group of students to the next grade level. Looping with students typically results in the generation of a positive classroom culture the following year. Since behavioral expectations had been previously established, less time is required for children to demonstrate proficiency levels relating to with social emotional learning. Participant C said:

I looped with these students, and we established our classroom expectations right from the start. Both the students and I set the standards for behavior and the consequences if not demonstrated. Most students required very little if any redirecting from the on-set of the school year. When I received this class the prior year, students would just run out of class and talk disrespectfully to one another and the teacher. Setting high standards and remaining consistent was key to starting the year where we had left off. Looping allowed me to have a strong self-efficacy with behavioral strategies. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participants B and D argued that their self-efficacy relating to behavioral approaches is not as strong as they had hoped it would be. Participant D expatiated that behaviorally challenged

students are the most difficult children to work and concluded with an expression of low self-efficacy before this in-service workshop:

Behavioral concerns are a challenge for all educators no matter how much experience you might have. I learned from trial and error. Different disciplines offer different approaches to behavioral concerns, as a result I feel less confident in this area than in others. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant B added that behaviorally challenged students test the self-efficacy of all teachers:

I would like to say that my self-efficacy was strong, but to be honest, behavioral students are a challenge to everyone. I was in a program this year and would try the strategies that I was learning, but my confidence wasn't always there. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant E asserted that their self-efficacy was medium before the workshop. Previous experiences yielded a mixture of positive and unsuccessful results. Participant E said:

I have had a mixture of results that were both positive and negative. Administration has placed many behaviorally challenged students in my classroom. I have confidence in my abilities most of the time, and then a child doesn't respond to the strategies that I have tried, and I feel less confident that I am doing well (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

A summary of this data point indicated that once again self-efficacy beliefs before this workshop were a mixture of varying levels. Participants A and F shared that they feel the most challenging students are always placed in their classes, thus their belief in implementing effective behavioral strategies in the general education environment was high no matter who the students were. In contrast, was the response of Participant E who also regularly received students with behavioral

concerns, responding with a neutral level of self-efficacy. Participant E reported a common phenomenon among teachers, when strategies are not as successful as expected, an educator's self-efficacy may diminish, which is supportive of research defining self-efficacy as cyclical.

Participants B and D talked about levels of self-efficacy that were low, specifically for participant D. Participant C was engaged in looping from the onset of the school year, which reinforced her self-efficacy as positive results were immediately witnessed from the start of the school year.

Mixed responses indicated many factors may need to be considered by the district pertaining to students with behavioral concerns. Future planning may require an understanding that when servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting one size does not fit all. Teachers will require an extensive repertoire of inclusive strategies.

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Following Inclusion Workshops

Participants were asked to describe their self-efficacy following the workshops as no change, slight increase, or great increase as compared to how they perceived their abilities before the workshop in implementing inclusive practices. Data analysis of self-efficacy descriptors is summarized in Table 6. Further elaboration of each participant's responses is provided in the proceeding sections.

Table 6

Self-Efficacy Descriptors Following Workshops

Participants	Collaboration	ELA	Mathematics	Behavioral
A	slight increase	slight increase	slight increase	slight increase
B	slight increase	great increase	slight increase	slight increase
C	slight increase	great increase	great increase	great increase
D	slight increase	great increase	great increase	great increase
E	slight increase	slight increase	slight increase	great increase
F	slight increase	slight increase	slight increase	slight increase

Self-Efficacy of Collaborative Practices after Workshop

Following the workshop on collaboration, all participants indicated that they had a slight increase in their ability to implement these inclusive practices. Each participant stated that time was still their greatest concern. Participant A shared:

I have been a teacher for a long time, and while I see the benefit in collaborative practices, I am concerned that the district would still not provide enough time to collaborate the way it should be done. We have to have time to review all scope and sequence, modify, accommodate, and meet regularly. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant B provided the following response: “I am looking forward to when we would have collaboration as part of our schedule” (personal communication, May 29, 2019). Participant C commented: “I think that collaborative practices are very important. I think that if we were to do exactly what the workshop stated everyone would do better” (personal communication, May 30, 2019). Participant D shared from a first-year teacher’s perspective:

As a first-year teacher, I find the time I do get to collaborate as invaluable. I really get a great deal out of the support from my colleagues. If we had more time to meet every week as a team with the related service providers. I know I learn so much more. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant E reported that communicating with parents is important. Collaborating with all members of the team including the students and parents definitely would make a difference. Consistency will be key to making sure that the best services are provided. Participant noted that they previously had a regular meeting time with all IEP members, especially the co-teachers and the difference in teaching was extremely important. Participant E added:

When I co-taught previously in the district, we had a partnership with Project Choices. Their support with the district provided us with regularly scheduled times to collaborate with each other. I worked very closely with the special education teacher. We met to plan lessons, assess the students, and discuss the lessons afterwards. We built a true partnership. No one can provide all of the necessary inclusive practices by themselves. (personal communication, May 31, 2019)

Self-Efficacy of ELA Inclusive Strategies after Workshop

In response to the question, “How would you describe your self-efficacy in providing inclusive ELA strategies following the workshop? all participants shared that they felt more confident in their practices. Participant C spoke specifically about a strategy that they had already begun to utilize following the professional workshop:

After the workshop, I learned that one of the strategies was to start off small. My student had a writing activity that he was to complete. I broke it up for him into smaller chunks, like you said to try, and it was manageable for him. He was not overwhelmed and the

free formed paragraphs that he writes were structured. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant A described an increase in self-efficacy, but with hesitation. The participant shared that a need for continued professional learning still exists. “I feel that the strategies shared allowed me to feel somewhat more comfortable, but to be honest, I feel that there is a need for more professional development to be provided” (personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participants B and D were similar in their responses to this prompt. Each participant acknowledged that the professional development session provided affirmation on their current instructional practices. In addition to an increased level of self-efficacy regarding their ability to extend grade level ELA standards to students with disabilities, the knowledge obtained in new strategies was enthusiastically conveyed. Participant D elaborated on a sense of affirmation from the workshop on ELA along with vehemence for additional strategies to implement in the future:

I knew that my approaches were the correct ones. The workshop built my self-efficacy. Some of the strategies provided gave me additional ideas to think about and how I am going to implement them. I am eager to implement them. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant B’s response aligned to participant D as was shared in the following response: “My self-efficacy definitely increased with this workshop. I got more ideas from the ELA workshop. My current strategies that I have used were confirmed. Both of these occurrences are really nice!” (personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participants E and F also responded that their self-efficacy was stronger as a result of the professional development in ELA strategies. Participant E conveyed a stronger self-efficacy by

saying, “I felt more confident after the workshop, because the strategies that were provided were some of the exact ones that I was using with my students. Self-efficacy in my practices could definitely be described as stronger” (personal communication, May 31, 2019). Participant F confirmed that no one person can effectively service diverse learners alone:

After the ELA workshop, my self-efficacy was strengthened, and my confidence was reassured. I realized once again that two teachers and professional support through continual learning is really important. To be really successful, a teacher must realize that they can’t do this alone. (personal communication, May 31, 2019)

Self-efficacy increased for all participants following the professional workshop on ELA strategies for diverse learners. All participants also elaborated that new strategies were obtained. Participant C was already able to share the success of implementing newly acquired knowledge into practice. All participants expressed an increase in the belief in their ability to implement ELA strategies with fidelity.

Self-Efficacy of Math Inclusive Strategies after Workshop

The participants were asked to describe their mathematics self-efficacy in servicing students with disabilities following the workshop. Resulting responses all indicate that there was an increase in self-efficacy or that their approaches were confirmed. Participant A clarified that while their self-efficacy increased, a concern still existed on whether the inclusive strategies would translate into student performance results:

I felt more confident, but my concern is will they really get it, even with the strategies that were provided. My greatest concern is what I am providing is enough to make sure that they are successful. I feel confident with the strategies that were provided, I felt that

many of them I had tried before, and the workshops reinforced what I had provided is successful in varying degrees. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant C expressed an increase in self-efficacy following the in-service, and also shared that the information confirmed their expectation that connecting mathematical concepts to real-life situations fosters an appreciation of the skills that are expected to be applied. “After the workshop, I realized even more that making the connections is how to have the students fall in love with math” (personal communication, May 30, 2019). Participant F shared a similar response to Participant C. The information provided during this session accentuated the importance of applying mathematical concepts to real life scenarios as a proven strategy for working with diverse learners. “The real-life situation approach was definitely confirmed. Having manipulatives that are more organized and problems to solve where the students see how math is all around us is how I prefer to teach” (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

Participant D also accentuated the importance of examples of application to life experiences of the students. “My self-efficacy grew tremendously after the workshop. I knew my approaches were correct. Finding real-life situations and connections is very important for students, especially academically challenged ones to understand the concepts” (personal communication, May 30, 2019). Participant B shared an affirmation of currently used strategies in the classroom. “Prior to the workshop, I wasn’t completely sure of my approaches. After the workshop, my confidence grew. I knew that what I was doing was correct for students struggling in math” (personal communication, May 29, 2019). Participant E expressed a similar affirmation that current practices were research based and appropriate for students with disabilities in the general education setting. “After the workshop, I would have to say that my

self-efficacy was even stronger. It confirmed my abilities in the strategies that I was using and gave me even more strategies to try” (personal communication, May 31, 2019).

All participants replied having an increased level of self-efficacy following the professional development workshop that provided mathematical strategies for servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting. For participants B and D, the level increased significantly. Participant A still has reservations on whether strategies shared will align to expected outcomes. For participants C, E, and F, their current practices were reinforced with additional strategies, specifically the practice of making connections to concepts through real-life applications and the use of manipulatives during problem solving activities.

Self-Efficacy of Behavioral Strategies after Workshop

Participants were asked to describe their self-efficacy following the workshop in providing behavioral strategies to students with disabilities that are experiencing difficulty in the general education setting. All participants shared that they experienced an increase in their self-efficacy as a result of this workshop and freely spoke of particular strategies that impacted their self-confidence in the greatest degree. Participant F shared personal testimony regarding a former behaviorally challenged student:

The ideas shared gave credibility to the approaches that I have used and offered new ones. Holding expectations high for even the most challenging of students and being consistent in those expectations can yield positive outcomes. I have a student who was very difficult that comes back every year, and so that I can see how much he has grown and matured. That experience gives you the confirmation for the reason why we do what we do. (personal communication, May 31, 2019)

Participant A elaborated as well on affirmation of previous practices in dealing with students that struggle with behavioral expectations:

I have always been confident with behavioral problem students. Principals always give me the students with behavior problems. I felt reassured that the strategies that I have used in the past were based on research, and I feel that I can continue to grow professionally. I was impressed with the fact that you shared that your entire classroom had growth and was successful. I am not sure that I could be that successful, perhaps 75% of my class might be successful. But the professional development gave me confidence that I am doing the right things for students with disabilities. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant C spoke about a stronger sense of self-efficacy following the workshop in addition to the strategies that they believe will have the greatest impact on future service to students that demonstrate behavioral challenges:

It was confirmed that modeling is so important for students, all students; talking things through, especially with the students with the greatest needs. I have seen definite positive change with the students that I have. They would walk out of the classroom. But after 2 years they have learned that talking things through and following up on what we expect from them works, staying consistent. I have found that students can be harder on each other and themselves than ever would be. The strategies that were shared are things that I implement regularly, and they work. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant B elaborated on how self-efficacy also increased following this session along with the importance of making connections with students on a social emotional level. “After the workshop in behavioral strategies, I know that what I am doing reaches my students. I have

many students that are struggling with social and emotional needs. Making connections with these students is really important” (personal communication, May 29, 2019).

Participant D commented that strategies directly relating to the behavior of the teacher may have the greatest impact on changing inappropriate behaviors exhibited by specific students:

This is the workshop that I loved the most. The strategies that were shared offered even more insight. I learned that demeanor plays a huge role. Staying calm in even the most difficult of situations can have positive results. Modeling what you expect from students can really work. Learning that there are three basic reasons for all behaviors put inappropriate behaviors into perspective for me. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant E expressed that this workshop had the strongest impact on their implementation and self-efficacy. “This was the workshop that impacted me the most. It was my favorite. Putting all behaviors into three categories of either sensory input, task avoidance, or attention helped to make sense of many inappropriate behaviors” (personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Review of the data responses regarding self-efficacy of educators following professional development on strategies for including students with behavioral challenges in the general education setting showed a positive increase. All participants expressed an increase in their belief of implementing behavioral strategies for challenging students. Further analysis indicated that each respondent shared a different strategy that directly heightened their personal efficacy of fulfilling the expectation of including all students to the maximum extent appropriate in the general education setting. Additionally, previous results in servicing students with behavioral concerns contribute to levels of self-efficacy in this inclusive practice.

Suggestions for Improving Inclusive Practices

Research has shown that an educator's self-efficacy is cyclical. The belief one has of their own ability to carry out expected outcomes directly impacts the outcome itself. The outcomes that result from implementation directly impact the individual's self-efficacy of their instructional practice. In addition to the performance levels achieved by individuals, self-efficacy is also correlated to collective efficacy (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Organizations that value the opinions and suggestions along with the performance outcomes of their employees show higher levels of overall success than organizations that do not exhibit these characteristics. South Suburban School District has recognized this relationship; thus, participants were asked to share suggestions for consideration in developing a district plan of implementing inclusive practices for students with diverse learning requirements.

Participants in this study were asked to provide suggestions for the district to implement future service to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Each participant freely spoke from their personal and professional experiences that included descriptions before and following the professional development sessions that were provided.

Participant A offered suggestions to share with district administrators that included an overhaul of the district's scope and sequence to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities:

One suggestion would be a curriculum map that we could use to follow what specific things each student should know at every grade level. It is really important that we don't allow the families or the school district to think that a child cannot be successful.

Perhaps these workshops and this research will help to keep this on everyone's minds.

(personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant B shared the following for an improvement plan based on previous work experiences:

Where I had worked previously, the school did a fantastic job in providing breakout times for professional development. That provided time wasn't taken from planning for lessons but was built in to allow for teacher growth and collaboration. The administration took into consideration the needs of time and created half days to bring in multi-disciplines, veteran teachers, and new teachers together to share what is working and not working. This was a great way for teachers to plan, better than a professional development day. (personal communication, May 29, 2019)

Participant C described their suggestions to be shared that included additional staff, more professional development, and a plan for communication with parents:

First, to communicate with the parents, we need a plan. In our school, especially, we need a body there—a psychologist, a social worker, a counselor—a resource there in the building. I heard a staff member say that “I am a general education teacher. I don't need to worry about them.” That was wrong, what if it was your child? These are all of our children. Each child comes with behavioral, social, or academic concerns. If more professional development was provided, then perhaps everyone would feel the self-efficacy necessary to meet the range of children they service. Teachers have to recognize and feel comfortable with all students and build their confidence. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant D contributed the following suggestions for a district improvement plan that included compensation and an opportunity for non-evaluative practice:

A paid week long professional development that includes all disciplines from the district would be ideal. Opportunities to try what is being taught, discuss challenges, and follow-

up throughout the school year. One week might not be enough time to properly ensure that practices are being implemented with fidelity. (personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant E shared these suggestions in regard to servicing students with disabilities:

You should come back and speak to all of the schools in the district. The framework that was started should be continued. We definitely should not stop here, but make sure that everyone in the district is on the same page in servicing students with disabilities.

(personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Participant F offered these contributions for the district plans moving forward: “Everyone in the district should be involved in professional development. There should be a partnership with an agency and resources provided in each of the schools. The approach should be district wide and supported within all of the schools” (personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Analysis of these data points support the need for professional development throughout the district. Participants B and D offered suggestions on how the professional development might be delivered. Participants F and C expressed the need for additional staff in each of the schools to assist with servicing students with disabilities. Participants A and C emphasized the importance of communication with families and holding high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities. The preceding suggestions are expanded upon in Chapter 5 for further implications and offered to South Suburban School District of Chicago and other districts for the development of plans to increase inclusive practices.

Summary

All participants indicated that their current roles in the district are that of a general educator. Additionally, each participant shared that students with disabilities should be educated

in their least restrictive environment or stated otherwise as included with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. This understanding or belief alone does not equate to an educator's expression of high self-efficacy in their ability to implement inclusive strategies with fidelity. Supportive of this summary were the responses of participants A, B, C, and D relating to their self-efficacy before the ELA workshop.

Participants A, B, C, and D indicated relatively low self-efficacy in their ability to implement strategies to service students who were identified as having deficits in the areas of ELA performance. Additionally, descriptions of self-efficacy before the workshop in mathematical strategies by these participants also indicated an expression of low ability confidence. Thus, acknowledgement and agreement of the LRE mandate alone does not equate to levels of high self-efficacy in the ability to implement best practices with fidelity.

Analysis of responses throughout the interviews suggest that all six participants agree that professional development and collaboration are necessary to ensure that inclusion is more than the environment a student with disabilities is educated in. Knowledge of instructional strategies is integral to an educator's self-efficacy in the ability to implement inclusionary practices. Data supportive of this conclusion is evidenced in post workshop responses. All six participants indicated an increased level of self-efficacy in collaborative practices, ELA, mathematics, and behavioral inclusive strategies following each workshop. Additionally, all participants expressed the need for professional development in one form or another as a suggestion for the district improvement plan to increase inclusive practices in servicing students with diverse learning needs.

Further examination of the data indicates that there is a definitive trend in responses to specific questions in support of professional development for servicing students with disabilities.

Participants E and F had experienced previous professional development in servicing diverse learners before these workshops. Each of these participants had previously been co-teachers within the district. Both participants had responses of higher self-efficacy in the areas of mathematics and ELA strategies before the workshops than those that had not participated in similar professional learning opportunities or held similar positions.

In contrast to the previous summation was the response of participant C regarding their self-efficacy before the workshop in mathematical inclusive strategies. Participant C expressed that their love for mathematics gave them self-confidence and a sense of high self-efficacy in regard to instructional practice but shared a feeling of frustration. The participant did not experience a transference of math appreciation among the students that were being served in their classroom. As described in the standards for teaching, content knowledge is a critical component of the framework for teaching. Every educator has strengths in one content or another. This response may require implications for further discussion and examination of research.

Previous career experience also shows an opposite trend in self-efficacy in the areas of implementing strategies in mathematics and ELA for students with disabilities. Participants B and D both shared that their years of experience as teachers were less than 3 years. Both participants indicated lower self-efficacy in these areas before the professional development workshops. While each of these participants were given positive reinforcement by the administration that their practices were adequate, their own belief in pedagogical practices are significantly lower than counterparts with different professional experiences and years of experience.

In contrast to the reported levels of low self-efficacy of participants B and D despite their reception of supportive feedback given in post observation conferences, were the responses of participants A and F. Administrative practices are shown to have a positive correlation in self-efficacy when implementing behavioral strategies for these participants. Participants A and F asserted that their self-efficacy in relation to students with behavioral concerns was high before the workshops. Each disclosed that students with high behavioral concerns are typically placed in their classrooms. Both revealed their confirmation that administration would not have placed these students with them if their ability was anything less than proficient. Participant F chronicled how a former student with behavior concerns returns every year to visit with evidence of maturity and accomplishments which reinforced their self-efficacy. For these participants, administrative action equated to a high level of self-efficacy before professional learning.

Analogous was the reaction to administrative practices for Participant C, who was requested to loop with their students. Composition of this class consisted of many students that had exhibited inappropriate behaviors the previous school year. Participant C concluded that shown successes of behavioral strategies that were implemented with these students are a direct result of looping with the students to the next grade. Participant C was definitive in the response of high self-efficacy before the workshop provided.

Data analysis of responses indicate an exception to the aforementioned trend of previous success and administrative practices resulting in high levels of self-efficacy. Participant E expressed a neutral level of self-efficacy in implementing behavioral strategies. Parallel to participants A and F, this participant shared that administration regularly placed behaviorally challenged students in their classroom. Further elaboration divulged that when students are responding to strategies self-efficacy is high, but when expected behavioral changes do not

occur, self-efficacy is low. Evidence that self-efficacy can be altered or changed as a consequence of an individual's accomplishments or lack of expected outcomes (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Vaz et al. 2015).

Chapter V: Discussion

Call for Theory into Action

The purpose of this qualitative study was designed to determine if teachers in a Chicago, Illinois South Suburban elementary school district increased their self-efficacy as it relates to serving students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment after receiving professional development. The Individuals with Disabilities Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires that students with disabilities are educated in their least restrictive environment. As a result, public school districts are required to consider the general education setting as the first option for providing special education services to students that require such support. These supports can be summarized as inclusionary practices.

Results from all six participants indicated an understanding and agreement of this mandate. Participants also expounded that all educators should hold the belief of including students with disabilities to the maximum extent with their non-disabled peers. In addition to their own attitudes towards inclusion, two participants indicated that there are educators within the district that have negative attitudes regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Review of current research surrounding inclusive practices indicated that non-compliant beliefs are not exclusive to South Suburban School District of Chicago (Cook et al., 2007). Research based on social cognitive theory, indicates that self- and collective efficacy is relational to the attitudes of individuals regarding specific behavioral outcomes.

Determining the plan of action to improve inclusive practices in South Suburban School District of Chicago had required intentional investigation of possible research-based solutions. Current research in the area of self-efficacy, which is defined as the belief that one can complete a task, impact a situation, or control an outcome, has shown to be directly related to intended

outcomes. “Many psychologists believe that self-efficacy is one of the most important predictors of what people actually do and how successful they will be in accomplishing their goals.”

(Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 166). Furthermore, Vaz et al. (2015) elaborated that self-efficacy is cyclical in nature. A teacher’s self-efficacy impacts their ability to provide adequate instruction and the actual deliverance of the discipline content reinforces their self-efficacy.

Research surrounding self-efficacy indicates that there is a direct relationship between the knowledge one possesses and their belief that they can directly impact, implement, or control a desired outcome. Educators obtain knowledge through a variety of sources. One of which is professional development. Defined by Adler (2000), professional development is the process by which educators obtain knowledge directly relating to pedagogy and strategies that are intended to increase the performance of those participating. Sharma et al. (2016) found significant correlations between self-efficacy and attitudes of educators following training regarding inclusive practices. Equipped with research findings and cognizant of the impact that self-efficacy has on performance, in what ways did providing specifically designed professional development workshops increase educators’ self-efficacy of implementing inclusive practices for students with disabilities with fidelity.

Discussion of Results

Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before Collaboration Workshop

Results from this data point were mixed and provide implications for the district to consider. Participants D and E were co-teachers within the district in previous years. During their experiences, each had received professional development, a schedule for collaborating and supports from a contracted organization: Project Choices. Each of these participants indicated a high level of efficacy in their abilities to collaborate effectively. Contrast, participants B and D

were beginning teachers with no experience as co-teachers or receiving professional development on inclusive practices. They indicated low levels of self-efficacy in their ability to implement collaborative practices with fidelity. Each shared that they recognize the importance and value in collaborating but are not confident in their own ability to do so. Additionally, participants A and C responded that their levels are of a medium range in self-efficacy. These responses imply that years of teaching and prior enactive experiences may correlate with perceived levels of efficacy.

Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before ELA Workshop

Analysis of self-efficacy of implementing ELA inclusive strategies before professional development indicated mixed responses from the participants. Regarding implementation of ELA inclusive practices before the workshop, 67% of the participants responded as having low self-efficacy responses were expressed as being low in self-efficacy. with disabilities in the general education setting. Interpretation of causes for this response can be summarized by several indicators that directly relate to the educators' perceived possession of required knowledge to implement the inclusive strategies with fidelity.

Supportive documentation for high self-efficacy before engagement in the specifically designed workshop series of inclusive strategies was identified through participants E and F's responses. Each had previously received professional development for servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting. Both educators had been engaged in the inclusive practice of co-teaching. They were partnered with a special education teacher, whereby collaboration occurred in the planning, instruction, and assessment of ELA standards for diverse learners in their classes.

Prior acquisition of knowledge for participants E and F resulted in confidence of achieving the intended outcome of implementing ELA inclusive strategies for diverse learners. In addition to their knowledge of inclusive practices, both educators articulated that their experience as co-teachers bring positive outcomes in student performance on standardized assessments. Concluding, there appears to be a significant relationship between the knowledge possessed by an educator regarding implementation of inclusive practices and their self-efficacy regarding the implementation of said practices.

Contrary responses were given by participants A, B, C, and D. Each of these participants indicated lower self-efficacy in delivering ELA inclusive strategies to students with disabilities in the general education setting before the workshop. Participants B and D had received positive feedback from administration following formal observations yet expressed self-doubt in their instructional practice. Their elaboration may indicate that the district should review current administrative practices pertaining to post observational feedback to educators.

Embedding feedback to teachers that is grounded in subsequent and observed data is essential for understanding conveyed proficiency levels. These findings are worth investigating and embedding in the district's improvement plan. Possible strategies for the district to include may be found in the research-based practices outlined in *Leverage Leadership: A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools* (Bambick-Santoyo, 2012).

Participants A and C indicated low levels of self-efficacy regarding ELA inclusive strategies. Further investigation of their responses indicated that similar to the previous educators, these educators asserted being insufficient in knowledge or actual experience with research-based strategies before the professional workshops. Subsequently, their elaboration included information that some inclusive strategies were being utilized in their current practice,

but their self-confidence in implementation with fidelity is not at a level they considered to be adequate. Re-examining the responses of participants E and F may provide in-sight into a missing component for these educators and an additional component of a comprehensive improvement plan for the district.

Friend and Bursuck (2019) emphasized that inclusion requires extensive and deliberate collaboration from all school stakeholders. Neither participant B nor D expressed participation in collaborative engagement of other team members within the district pertaining to the necessary supports and services outlined in their students' IEPs. Contrarily, participants E and F had participated extensively in collaborative efforts regarding inclusive practices. As provided in the first workshop of the professional development series, effective inclusive implementation of mandates that expectations require specifically designed and deliberative collaborative engagement (Friend & Cook, 2010). South Suburban School District of Chicago should consider incorporation of specified collaboration times and practices into the overall improvement plan for increasing inclusive practices.

Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before Mathematical Workshop

Analysis of data responses pertaining to self-efficacy of implementing inclusive mathematical strategies for diverse learners in their least restrictive environment provided conflicting evidence of the relationship between knowledge and self-efficacy. Once again, participants E and F expressed high levels of self-efficacy before the workshops, noting their previous career experiences resulted in self-confidence. Research findings of Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly (2003) along with Shillingford and Karlin (2014) collaborate participants E and F's responses, in that exposure to students with disabilities combined with information-based opportunities promotes positive attitudes toward inclusion and effective implementation of

inclusive practices. Additionally, these participants expressed that comprehensive learning opportunities coupled with positive outcomes prompted their high levels of self-efficacy, supporting evidence from research findings that self-efficacy is cyclic in nature as supported by Vaz et al. (2015), and collaboration is necessary component to produce positive outcomes as suggested by Gotshall and Stefanou (2011).

Adding to the eclectic responses were participants B, and D, who expressed low levels of self-efficacy in their abilities to implement mathematical inclusive strategies. While in contrast, participant A expressed a level of somewhat confident in their ability to implement inclusive strategies. Interpreting the responses from participants B, D, and A may lead to indicators that years of experience as a general education teacher directly impacts one's self-efficacy as well (Brady & Woolfson, 2008).

Participants B and D confided that their current status of novice educators create self-doubt of their instructional practices even after receiving supportive feedback from administration. Nearing retirement, participant A expressed that prior success supports belief in the ability to implement inclusive math strategies. Referencing that self-efficacy is cyclic in nature, requiring an affirmation of belief through achievement of expected outcomes, the novice status of participants B and D does not allow for confirmation of instructional implementation. Participant A had seen positive outcomes achieved during tenure as an educator.

Consequently, implications from analysis of this data point should be referenced in the district's plan for increasing inclusive practices. Novice teachers may require support in the area of formative assessment interpretation (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2019). Administrative feedback of instructional practice should be evidenced in student outcome data (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). While results from summative assessments (NWEA and PARCC) had not been received before

the workshops, educators can predict levels of student achievement through the practice of interpreting formative assessment of required standards. Further discussion of effective teaching through assessments in the development of goals to improve inclusive practices may require professional development beyond pedagogy and content.

Interpretation of participant C's response of self-efficacy before the workshop in mathematics may also support that sustained high levels of self-efficacy requires the realization that self-efficacy is not only dependent on one's belief of achievement, but on the subsequent outcomes following implementation of the required task. Participant C possess a strong belief in their ability and a love for the subject being taught. Mahler et al. (2018) found a correlation between teacher subject specific enthusiasm and positive student outcomes. Unfortunately, for participant C, student performance has not correlated to expected outcomes, which may attribute to the educator expressing a level of frustration with implementing mathematical strategies to students with disabilities.

Analysis from this data point may subsequently require the district plan to include scheduled conferencing with educators to discuss results and practices, what's working and what is not. Implementation of data driven school-based problem-solving team to achieve the desired outcomes through instructional practice may also be a goal of the improvement action plan (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2019).

Implications of Self-efficacy Descriptors Before the Behavioral Workshop

Inclusion requires the ability of educators to not only integrate components relating to the academic progress of students with disabilities, but also those supporting positive behavioral supports in their implementation of inclusive practices. Studies conducted by Oakes, Lane, Jenkins, and Booker (2013), and Oakes et al. (2018) denoted that school districts are required to

foster an orderly, creative, and safe environment for all students. Danielson (2012) had also asserted this requirement as Domain 2 of her framework for teaching. Of equal significance, educators who consider themselves less competent or express lower levels of self-efficacy may exhibit higher levels of teacher burnout and exit the field of teaching altogether (Oakes et al. 2013). Consequently, initiatives to improve inclusive practices should include consideration of educators' self-efficacy as it pertains to their ability to implement behavioral strategies to students exhibiting challenges in this of social emotional learning.

Analysis of responses of self-efficacy for behavioral strategies before the workshops, generated a trend that administrative practices may directly influence self-efficacy in this area of including students in their least restrictive environment. Urton et al. (2014) surmised that inclusive practices require fundamental change within the school's overall organizational structure, adding that individual teacher's self-efficacy may be directly impacted by the actions of other members of the staff and supportive administration. Participants A, F, and C shared that decisions made by the administration regarding the students that were placed in their classes impact their self-efficacy regarding the implementation of behavioral strategies.

Participants A and F shared their understanding that administration purposefully placed students that have displayed behavioral challenges in their classrooms. Interpretation on their behalf of this intentional practice, has culminated in their expression of high self-efficacy. These participants explained that if their implementation of behavioral strategies was not proficient, then administration would never have placed their trust of educating these students with them. These responses correlate with findings that collective efficacy as exhibited through actions of members with the school specifically school administration and their normal frame of action impact individual self-efficacy (Goddard et al., 2015).

Administration has additionally expanded their impact of teacher's self-efficacy beliefs with their anticipated results of instructional and environmental performance of participant C through the initiating the educational practice of looping with their students to the next grade. As discussed in earlier analysis, the actions of the administration through direct and indirect feedback may be interpreted as an outcome of effective instruction, thus supporting positive expressions of self-efficacy. For these educators, the composition of their classrooms' student population and the provided reasoning behind the action, resulted in an expression of high self-efficacy in implementing behavioral strategies.

Beyond the actions of administration directly impacting self-efficacy, the district should further investigate the research supporting teacher leaders and their direct influence on intended change. Districts that leverage the successes of teacher leaders within their schools have been found to increase positive outcomes toward the intended desired outcomes (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Childress et al., 2017; Lambert, 2003). School districts might benefit from goals within their improvement plan that incorporate the knowledge of teacher leaders in facilitating changes in practices relating to students with behavioral challenges in the general education setting.

An analysis of the responses of participants B and D provides supportive evidence that teachers require sufficient time to practice expected pedagogical strategies while receiving intentional feedback (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). Both participants expressed lower self-efficacy and attributed this to their lack of experience in the field of teaching, supporting that there is a correlation between attitudes and self-efficacy of educators and their experience in working with students with disabilities (Shillingford & Karlin, 2014). Relatively new to their careers as educators, participants B and D asserted that they are providing supports effectively, but are not sure, resulting in their feelings of inadequacy.

Suggestions from their participants B and D's responses for a district improvement plan might include regularly scheduled observations that were focused solely on the social emotional components of the classroom environment as put forth in components of Domain 2 of Danielson's framework for teaching (2007). Notwithstanding, would be the requirement of immediate feedback from the observations, including witnessed strengths and areas for improvement, along with a scheduled time to observe the intended change in practice.

Implications Following Workshops to Increase Inclusive Practices

Providing supports and services to diverse learners in the general education setting depends on an educator's ability to masterfully maneuver an abundance of expectations with fidelity (Friend & Bursuck, 2019). Acquisition of knowledge in implementing the expected practice is essential to self-efficacy. Research has confirmed that professional development has been shown to positively impact teachers' self-efficacy in their ability to implement pedagogical theory into action (Sweigart & Collins, 2017).

Participants in this study participated in a series of professional workshops incorporating research-based strategies that support inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education environment. Responses from all six participants indicate an acknowledgement of increased cognizance of inclusive strategies and collaborative practices following professional development in all subject areas presented. Current research indicates that educators who participate in professional development are more likely to exhibit competencies in required expectations (Kavale & Spaulding, 2008), subsequently supporting the responses of the participants that professional development for all staff should be an integral component of the district improvement plan for increasing inclusive practices.

Regardless of the responses of participants before the series of workshops, each participant shared an increase in their overall self-efficacy of collaborative practices, ELA, mathematics, and behavioral strategies in servicing students with disabilities in the general education setting following their active engagement in the professional development. Analysis of these responses support current research on self-efficacy pertaining to inclusive practice (Bourke, 2014; Bublitz, 2016; Frumos, 2018) and within the profession of teaching in general (Olayiwola, 2011).

Conclusions from these discussion implications correspond to current empirical research indicating consistent correlations that educators who express higher levels of self-efficacy in regard to their ability to carry-out expected outcomes, demonstrate higher levels of performance within the specified domains of professional practice and student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Subsequently, concluding from these interviews and data derived from previous investigations of self-efficacy in relation to instruction and student performance outcomes following educators' participation in professional development, South Suburban School District of Chicago would be remiss if plans for increasing implementation of inclusive strategies throughout the district do not include strategically designed opportunities for educators to receive professional training regarding expected pedagogical practices.

Discussion of Suggestions for Improving Inclusive Practices

In addition to an individual's self-efficacy, the actualization of collective self-efficacy is as vital to the success of an organization to carry out desired change or outcomes. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) explained that collective efficacy differs from self-efficacy in that it is the perception of the school or district in their ability to influence or impact achievement as a product of the educational interactions of the group as a whole. Furthermore, it is not an

aggregate of individual beliefs of efficacy, but rather a characteristic of the experiences within the school system as perceived by the members. Collective self-efficacy can be described as “the belief of its members that a group-family, team, an organization, a nation - can come together to have an impact on and exert control over events,” (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 167).

While collective efficacy is different than self-efficacy, each may influence the other construct within an organization. Teachers with high self-efficacy may perceive the ability of the group as a whole as capable of change in practice, while inversely, teachers with low self-efficacy may limit their own actions or inhibit the group from executing the desired reform efforts (Goddard, 2001). Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) concluded that whether the collective efficacy promotes academic advancements or inhibits constructive reform, it is typically generalized as a stable cultural component of the school or district and requires concerted efforts to change.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) concluded that collective efficacy is only the first concept in accomplishing goals that matter to the entire school or district. Of equal importance are the concepts of agreeing on the goals that are to be achieved, developing the process for achieving the goals as a community, and identifying and using all available assets to achieve the desired outcome. Of those assets are volunteers that are committed to the vision or expected change/outcomes that have been agreed upon.

The participants in this study volunteered to be interviewed as a result of their commitment to increasing inclusive strategies with the district. Their responses to questions solidify their belief of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Their willingness to be involved beyond participation during grade-level workshops confirms an agreement to the district’s wider mission to improve educational practices and outcomes for all

students. The district recognized the importance of these individuals to the collective self-efficacy required to promote substantial changes in practice and overall acceptance of including students with disabilities in the general education setting, thus requesting their suggestions toward the creation of a district improvement plan is consequently considered to be an integral component to the fruition of increasing inclusive practices.

In reviewing the data accumulated by participants for future district improvement plans in servicing students with disabilities, 100% of responses included the need for professional development for staff throughout the entire district. Participants B and D offered additional suggestions for completing the professional development. They provided specific details on time to be allocated for professional development that would not interfere with the daily requirements of planning, preparation, and implementation of common core standards for student achievement.

Participant D recommended that the time required to develop mastery of inclusive strategies be compensated by the district. Both participants shared that the professional development participants should include members from all disciplines that are expected to collaborate and develop the supports and services listed within an IEP. Their responses support the findings derived from the research completed by Faracias (2015). The researcher concluded that instructional behaviors change as a result of effective professional development and should be a “call to action to school administrators who are responsible for fostering growth among teachers and learning among students,” (p. 158).

Further analysis revealed the necessity of parent involvement through responses of participants A and C. Collaboration in servicing students with diverse learning needs should involve stakeholders beyond the school, including the students themselves. Interpretation of

these responses correlates to evidence presented by Friend and Bursuck (2019) that the effectiveness of inclusive practices is intertwined with the proficiency of team members to consistently collaborate on the development, implementation, and assessment of individualized supports and services. Participant F shared infinite insight by stating that no one can do this alone.

Following up on the premise that individual educators do not implement effective strategies without intentional involvement of other stakeholders was the analysis of suggestions provided by 83% of the participants. Analysis indicate that five of the six educators recommend that the district seek expertise from outside professionals in the field of special education. Recommendations included but were not limited to professors from universities, agencies that specialized in supporting services to diverse learners and their educators, along with a continued partnership with this researcher. Moreover, 50% of the participants concluded that in addition to outside agencies, consideration should also be given to educators within the district that have shown positive results in implementation of inclusive strategies. Staff should have the opportunity to collaborate, observe, and learn from their successes.

An analysis from these suggestions support the evidence that transformative change requires the ability of a school district to assess the resources necessary to facilitate the mutually agreed upon measurement for success (Duke, 2010). For South Suburban School District of Chicago, the outcome of the improvement plan is to increase inclusive strategies. In so doing, research findings suggest that the academic performance of students with disabilities will also increase. This data point indicates that resources both within and outside of the district should be examined as a prominent component of the improvement plan.

Furthermore, the response of participant A (nearing retirement), capitulates that the district improvement plan must begin with an overall examination of expected outcomes for all students that are aligned to CCSS for each grade level within the district. Participant A's suggestion for a scope and sequence of instruction to obtain academic achievement outcomes should be the first outcome to improve inclusive strategies. The participant contended that if all educators are not aware of intentional instruction, then students with diverse learning needs will never meet their potential, because deliberate, purposeful instruction is not aligned across the district.

Participant A argued that lessons cannot be efficiently modified for students with disabilities because the district is lacking in consistent pacing guides, scope and sequence frameworks, and uniformly designed formative assessments for general education students. The implications of this response may have a far-reaching level of significance than any other factor in a district improvement plan (Bambick-Santoyo, 2012; Duke, 2010; Lambert, 2003; Marzano, et al. 2005).

Summary of Discussion Implications

Current research surrounding inclusive practices indicates correlation between teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes towards inclusive practices, professional development, and collective efficacy of a school district. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) indicated that modern psychologists believe that one of the greatest predictors of implementing any given task is an individual's self-efficacy. Urton et al. (2014) concluded that attitudes toward inclusive practices are directly related to self-efficacy and additionally to collective efficacy. Concurrently, professional development or an increase in knowledge pertaining to expected outcomes has been found to increase self-efficacy.

The research design for this study embedded in social cognitive theory set out to determine in what ways participating in professional development of inclusive strategies incorporated these factors and set out to determine that if professional development was provided to educators regarding strategies associated with effective inclusive practices, would participants indicate an increase in self-efficacy. Implications from the results indicate that are teachers across the district that do not possess attitudes that are in favor of inclusive practices. While all participants in this study indicated they themselves are in favor of inclusion, two participants indicated that others in the district are not.

Collective efficacy of an organization promotes the most positive outcomes of instructional implementation, cultural environment, and student achievement (Goddard et al. 2015). Research findings support that the most effective reforms in educational practice are achieved when members of a school district agree upon a common goal (Duke, 2010).

Overwhelmingly, analysis of participants' responses show an increase in self-efficacy following participation in workshops providing effective inclusive strategies in mathematics, ELA, and behavioral strategies. These findings suggest that the recommendation of professional development should be included in district improvement plans to increase inclusive practices.

Data analysis from responses before inclusive practices workshops indicated mixed results of self-efficacy. Implications derived from these responses elicited recommendations for creating time for collaborative practice to occur, improvements in administrative observational feedback processes, and increased training in data driven instructional practices as ways to improve self-efficacy among educators in implementing inclusive practices for students in the general education setting and are worth noting in recommendations for the district to improve inclusive practices.

The aforementioned qualitative data obtained from this study confirms that like many schools across this country and in other regions of the world that are expected to carry out the legal requirements of including students in the general education setting, not all staff at Mary Elementary School are in agreement with the mandate. Attitudes toward inclusiveness may be directly impacting student outcomes and teacher performance (Alexander, 2014). The belief that students with disabilities should be included to the maximum extent by all members of the teaching staff at the pilot school and within South Suburban School District of Chicago directly impacts the collective efficacy of the district and ultimately their vision of providing their core foundation values for all students.

Data analysis from the participants in this study correspond to the research findings of Moreno et al. (2015) that attitudes of discernment regarding inclusion may be the result of lack of support and understanding of expected practice resulting in apprehension to inclusion in general, concern that the practice of inclusive practices may disadvantage students without disabilities, and the time required to support these challenged students. While this data is not exclusive to the district, the need to address these findings within the improvement plan goals is a requisite.

Subsequently deriving from this starting point is the overwhelming data to support professional learning within the improvement plan. Investigations into the practice of educators (Oaks, et al. 2011) and attrition from the field (Kaufman & Ring, 2011) have been found to be directly linked to the pedagogical and content knowledge of teachers. Further review of literature surrounding the research of inclusive practices supports the identified level of an educator's self-efficacy in actually implementing expected strategies for supporting students with disabilities in the general education setting.

According to Boyatzis and McKee (2005), self-efficacy may be one of the strongest indicators of what people will actually do and their success in accomplishing their intended outcome. Additionally, there is evidence that professional development increases the self-efficacy of those that are participating in the acquisition of knowledge (Alexander, 2014; Bourke, 2014; Cook et al., 2007; Dupoux et al., 2005). Supportive of these findings were data points following the professional workshops. All participants showed some level increased self-efficacy in their ability to implement ELA, mathematics, and behavioral inclusive strategies. Implications for the development of the district improvement plan indicate the necessity of a comprehensive professional learning plan to increase the likelihood that educators possess the self-efficacy to implement inclusive strategies with fidelity.

Beyond the data pertaining to improving inclusive strategies derived from the participant responses are an underlying suggestion that a district improvement plan should incorporate a comprehensive examination of the district's fundamental execution of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of CCSS. Interconnected to this examination, data analysis included the vital components of systems for collaborating and administrative feedback of performance indicators as they relate to the framework for teaching and expected outcomes.

Recommendations

“Putting the pieces together” (Friend & Bursuck, 2019, p. 21) requires an examination of the findings associated with the study. As previously mentioned, an effective district plan for inclusive practices requires the ability to recognize and deliver a myriad of integrated variables. An understanding of and effective implementation of inclusive practices requires districts to integrate the physical environment and social expectations of diverse learners, along with the instructional practices and self-efficacy of educators.

The data accumulated for this study indicates that in order for school districts to improve inclusive practices as a requirement of IDEA, the self-efficacy of its collective stakeholders should be increased. This was evidenced in data resulting in negative attitudes of teachers pertaining to the practice of including students with disabilities in the general education setting. While research indicates that collective efficacy of an organization is not an accumulation of all members' self-efficacy, there is a correlation that individuals perceived efficacy in completing the requirements of effective instruction and social emotional learning directly impacts the goals of the organization or district as a whole. Inversely, how educators interpret the collective efficacy of a district in meeting their intended vision influences the expected outcomes (Oakes et al., 2013).

Recommendations derived from data analysis of responses before and after the inclusive practices workshops indicate that when considering a plan to improve inclusive practices, school districts should intentionally incorporate a goal for district-wide professional development to occur. The professional learning should include time to collaborate, practice new skills, and exposure to the intended targeted population, in this case, students with disabilities. This implication aligns with current research that indicates an increase in knowledge relating to expected behaviors correlates to an increase in an individual's self-efficacy. As previously mentioned, increases in self-efficacy positively influence an educators willingness to persevere through challenges and engage in research based strategies that were once foreign to the educator, thus influencing the outcomes of instruction as measured in student performance (Bandura, 1982; Sharma et al., 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Furthermore, analysis of the data initiated responses for collaborative practices to be included in plans for improving inclusive practices. As research suggests, no one individual can

effectively maneuver through the interconnected requirements of inclusionary requirements (Friend & Cook, 2010). Collaboration time must be an integral component of a district inclusive practices plan. Data indicates that collaboration should occur between special and general educators, administration, related service providers, parents, and students identified as having diverse learning needs. Since the educational process is directly related to the outcomes of student performance, their input in the effectiveness and their individual needs must be referenced and acknowledged for success (Vaughn & Bos, 2012).

Additionally, implications of results from this study show that school districts should also incorporate goals relating competencies in understanding data that is intentionally derived from both formative and summative assessments of student performance. Districts should provide explicit training in monitoring the progress of intended outcomes of CCSS and behavioral expectations of its student population, both general and special education. The data derived from reviewing student performance outcomes directly drives the instructional process of educating students. Student assessment and application of the information obtained from analyzing the outcomes is essential to the framework of teaching and the efficacy of all stakeholders.

Coinciding with the previously mentioned recommended goal, a district plan for increasing inclusive practices might begin with an overhaul of educators understanding of intended outcomes as pertaining to measurements of student performance of CCSS. Participant A indicated that educators are not clear of the scope and sequence of curriculum, instructional strategies required to meet expectations, and the overall assessment process required for student achievement or attainment in grade level standards. Before a district can embark on transformational change in practices, all stakeholders must have a comprehensive understanding of expectations. The district would benefit from beginning their execution of improving

inclusive practices with the exact starting point for any district plan, understanding what the intended outcomes are for the students educated within the district.

Subsequently, an effective district improvement plan requires the ability to investigate all available assets. Data analysis in this study reveal that assets to be considered include teacher leaders within the district. These leaders already exhibit the common vision of increasing inclusive practices, high levels of self-efficacy, and positive academic and behavioral student outcomes. Additionally, responses indicate previous successes with the utilization of in-house and outside agency experts in the field of special education. And relating to the previous recommendation, experts in designing and implementing the overarching goal of intended expectations for the student population as a whole.

Interconnected throughout the entire development, execution, and intended outcome of a district plan is the leadership within the organization at the school and district level. Data analysis of participant responses indicate careful examination of practices, beliefs, involvement, and behaviors of the administrators directly influences individual and collective efficacy in carrying out goals designed to change institutionalized culture. If school districts intend to increase inclusive practices within the district, goals surrounding administrative practices must also be incorporated into an improvement plan.

Conclusion

“Putting the pieces together” is illustrated in Figure 2. When a district develops a plan for increasing inclusive practices, it is essential to see how all of interconnected activities come to fruition. Districts that do not consider how vital the social cognitive interaction is may not be looking at the big picture and may ultimately be experiencing very mixed results in their evaluation of inclusive practices.

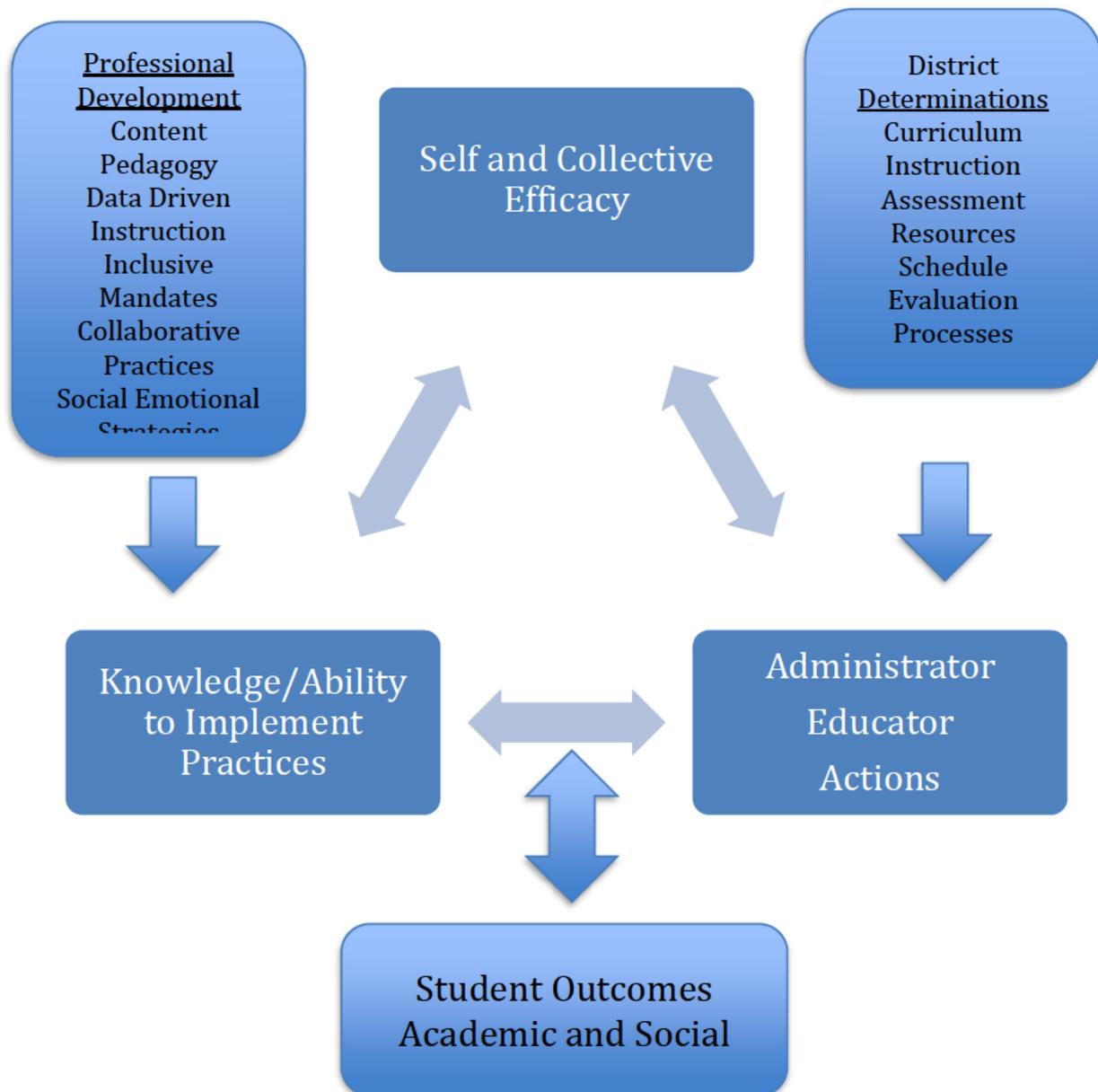


Figure 2. Self-efficacy and putting the pieces together for district inclusive practices.

Important to note are the findings of Bandura (1982). Self-perceived self-efficacy is a better predictor of future behavior than actual performance or enactive information. School districts should take into careful consideration the high levels of expressed self-efficacy following professional development that include carefully determined curriculum, instructional

processes, assessments, schedules providing collaboration, resources, and teacher evaluations that provide for safe practice times. Professional development opportunities should be provided in content, pedagogy, special education, and data driven instruction cycles. When districts intentionally plan to “put the pieces together” and people (Collins, 2001) in the right places, student outcomes are likely to be at a higher achievement level—academically and socially, or at least perceived to reflect a better opportunity for self and collective achievement.

References

- Adler, F. (2000). Social practice theory and mathematics teacher education: A conversation between theory and practice. *Nordic Mathematics Education Journal*, 8, 31-53.
- Alexander, L. (2014). *Inclusion: What works and does not work -perceptions of middle school teachers*. Retrieved from: ProQuest Digital Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2012). *Leverage leadership: A practical guide to building exceptional schools*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2019). *Driven by data 2.0: A practical guide to improving instruction*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist* 37(2) 122-147.
- Bourke, J. (2014). *The effects of inclusive professional development on general education teachers*. Retrieved from: ProQuest Digital Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Brady, K., & Woolfson, L. (2008). What teacher factors influence their attributions for children's difficulties in learning? *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78(4), 527–544. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1348/000709907X268570>
- Callado Moreno, J. A., Molina Jaén, M. D., Pérez Navío, E., & Rodríguez Moreno, J. (2016). Inclusive education in schools in rural areas. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 5(2), 107-114. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1127213&site=ehost-live>

- Campbell, J., Gilmore, L., & Cuskelly, M. (2003). Changing student teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 28(4), 369-379.
- Childress, S. M., Doyle, D. P., & Thomas, D. A. (2017). *Leading for equity: The pursuit of excellence in Montgomery County Public Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education, Press.
- Chitiyo, J., & Brinda, W. (2018). Teacher preparedness in the use of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. *Support for Learning*, 33(1), 38-51. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12190>
- Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2016). *Development process*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Cook, B. G., Cameron, D. L., & Tankersley, M. (2007). Inclusive teachers' attitudinal ratings of their students with disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education*, 40(4), 230-238.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Dessementet, R., Bless, G. G., & Morin, D. D., (2012). Effects of inclusion on the academic achievement and adaptive behavior of children with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 56, 579-587.
- Duke, D. L. (2010). *The challenges of school district leadership*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Dupoux, E., Wolman, C., & Estrada, E. (2005). Teachers' attitudes toward integration of students with disabilities in Haiti and the United States. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 52, 43-58.
- Faracias, K. L. (2015). *The effect of professional development training on the instructional behaviors of middle and high school co-teachers*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Fitzpatrick, M., & Knowlton, E. (2009). Bringing evidence-based self-directed intervention practices to the trenches for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure*, 53(4), 253-266.
- Freeman, S. F. N., & Marvin, C. A. (2000). Academic and social attainments of children with mental retardation in general education and special education settings. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(1), 3-18.
- Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2019). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2010). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Frumos, L. (2018). Attitudes and self-efficacy of Romanian Primary School Teachers towards including children with special needs in regular classrooms. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 10(4), 118-135. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/77>
- Goddard, R., Goddard, Y., Sook K. E., & Miller, R. (2015). A theoretical and empirical analysis of the roles of instructional leadership, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy beliefs in support of student learning. *American Journal of Education*, 121(4), 501-530. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1086/681925>

- Gotshall, C., & Stefanou, C. (2011). The effects of on-going consultation for accommodating students with disabilities on teacher self-efficacy and learned helplessness. *Education, 132*(2), 321–331. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=70532600&site=ehost-live>
- Hattie, J. A. C., (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Huberman, M, Navo, M., & Parrish, T. (2012). Effective practices in high performing districts serving students in special education. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 25*(2), 59-71.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (n. d.). *New Illinois learning standards-math/ELA*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/common_core/default.htm
- Imbimbo, J., & Knopf, N. (2009). The center for school success promising practices series: Special education inclusion. *New Visions for Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521688>
- Jones, K. (2012, August 15). *What is the purpose of education*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2012/08/15/what-is-the-purpose-of-education/>
- Justice, L. M. ., Petscher, Y., Schatschneider, C., & Mashburn, A. (2011). Peer effects in preschool classrooms: Is children’s language growth associated with their classmates’ skills? *Child Development, 82*(6), 1768-1777. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01665.x>
- Kaufman, R. C., & Ring, M. (2011). Pathways to leadership and professional development: Inspiring novice special educators. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 43*(5), 52-60.

- King, M. L. (1947, February). Purpose of Education. *Maroon Tiger Campus Newspaper* February.
- Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Lee-Tarver, A. (2006). Are individual education plans a good thing? A survey of teachers' perceptions of IEPs in regular education settings. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 33, 264-272.
- Mahler, D., GroBschedl, J., & Harms, U. (2018). Does motivation matter? The relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and enthusiasm and students' performance. *PLOS ONE* 13(11), 1-18. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0207252>
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- McLeskey, J. & Waldon, N. L. (2011). Educational programs for elementary students with learning disabilities. Can they be both effective and inclusive? *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 26(1), 48-57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2010.00324.x>
- Monje, L. D. (2014). *General education teachers' attitudes about inclusion* (doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Mulholland, S., & Cumming, T. M. (2016). Investigating teacher attitudes of disability using a non-traditional theoretical framework of attitude. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 80, 93-100. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.10.001>

- National Conference of State Legislatures. (n. d.). *Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act, legislation reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Retrieved from http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/ESSA_summary_NCSL.pdf
- Northwest Evaluation Association (n.d.) *About NWEA*. Retrieved from <https://www.nwea.org/about/>
- Oakes, W. P., Lane, K. L., Jenkins, A., & Booker, B. B. (2013). Three-tiered models of prevention: Teacher efficacy and burnout. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 36(4), 95-126.
- Oakes, W. P., Schellman, L. E., Lane, K. L., Common, E. A., Powers, L., Diebold, T., & Gaskill, T. (2018). Improving educators' knowledge, confidence, and usefulness of functional assessment-based interventions: Outcomes of professional learning. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 41(4), 533-566.
- Olayiwola, I. O. (2011). Self-efficacy as predictor of job performance of public secondary school teachers in Osun State. *IFE Psychologia*, 19(1), 441-455. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=66960995&site=ehost-live>
- Peterson-Ahmad, M. B., Hovey, K. A., & Peak, P. K. (2018). Pre-service teacher perceptions and knowledge regarding professional development: Implications for teacher preparation programs. *The Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship*, 7(2), 1-16.
- Ross, J., & Bruce, C. (2007). Professional development effects on teacher efficacy: Results of randomized field trial. *Journal of Educational Research*, 101(1), 50-60. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ776274&site=ehost-live>

- Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs* 12(1), 12-21 doi 10.1111/j.1471-3802.2011.01200.x
- Sharma, U., & Nuttal, A. (2016). The impact of training on pre-service teacher attitudes, concerns, and efficacy towards inclusion. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(2), 142-155. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2015.1081672>
- Shillingford, S., & Karlin, N. (2014). Preservice teachers' self-efficacy and knowledge of emotional and behavioural disorders. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 19(2), 176-194. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2013.840958>
- Signor-Buhl, S. J., LeBlanc, M., & McDougal, J. (2006). Conducting district-wide evaluation of special education services: A case example. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43(1), 109-115. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20134>
- Silverman, S. K., Hazelwood, C., & Cronin, P. (2009). Universal education: *Principles and practices for advancing achievement of students with disabilities*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children. Retrieved from http://education.ohio.gov/up_doc_cms/Universal_Ed_Report_2009-08.pdf
- Spaulding, L. S., & Pratt, S. M. (2015). A review and analysis of the history of special education and disability advocacy in the United States. *American Education History Journal*, 42(1/2), 91-109.
- Sweigart, C. A., & Collins, L. W. (2017). Supporting the needs of beginning special education teachers and their students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 49(4), 209-212. doi: 10.1177/0040059917695264

- Sze, S. (2009). A literature review: Pre-Service teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities. *Education, 130*(1), 53-56. Retrieved from <http://proxy.govst.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=44016513&site=ehost-live>
- Taylor, D. B., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., & Flowers, C. (2010). A qualitative study of teacher perceptions on using an explicit instruction curriculum to teach early reading skills to students with significant developmental disabilities. *Reading Psychology, 31*(6), 524-545. doi: 10.1080/02702710903256569
- Urton, K., Wilbert, J., & Hennemann, T. (2014). Attitudes towards inclusion and self-efficacy of principals and teachers. *Learning Disabilities – A Contemporary Journal, 12*(2), 151-168. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=100079021&site=ehost-live>
- Vaz, S., Wilson N., Falkmer M., Sim A., Scott, M., Cordier R., et al. (2015) Factors associated With primary school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. *PLoS ONE, 10*(8), e0137002. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0137002
- Vaughn, S., & Bos, C. S. (2012). *Strategies for teaching students with learning and behavior problems*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Wallender, J. (2014). The common core state standards in American public education: Historical underpinnings and justifications. *Delta Kappa Gamma, 80*(4), 7-11.
- Westling, D. L., & Fox, L. (2009). *Teaching students with severe disabilities*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Wright, P. W. D., & Wright, P. D. W. (2011). *Special education law* (2nd ed). Hartford, Virginia: Harbor House Law Press, Inc.

Appendix A

Governors State University College of Education

Title of Research Study: Increasing Self-Efficacy with Inclusive Practices

Principal Investigator: Teresa K. Nagy

Key Information:

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to participate or not. More detailed information is listed later on in this consent form.

- Your consent to participate in this study is being sought through a description of activities in this form. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without any penalty.
- The purpose of this study is to determine if a teacher's self-efficacy of implementing inclusive practices increases as a result of professional development.
- You will be asked to complete an interview following four professional development workshops.
- We expect that your participation in this study will take one hour to complete the interview.

The risks of participating are minimal. There is a less than minimal chance that your identity as a participant may become known. The benefits of the study are the increased knowledge of inclusive practices that may occur. The results from the interview will guide the district improvement plans for future planning relating to inclusive practices.

Why am I being asked to participate in this research study?

The district is seeking input from teachers to improve the inclusive practices within schools. The interview will provide valuable data to guide future practices.

What should I know about participating in a research study?

- Someone will explain the research study to you.
- Whether or not you participate is up to you. You can choose not to participate.
- You can agree to participate and then later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you or result in penalty.
- You can ask all of the questions that you want before you decide.

What happens if I agree to participate in the research study?

A series of questions will be asked by the researcher. The interview will be audio recorded and the information transcribed into the final report. Upon completion of the transcription, the audio will be erased. Your identity will remain anonymous at all times. The information gained will help guide the districts' knowledge of teachers' self-efficacy relating to inclusive practices before and after professional development. This information will help to guide future practices within the school district.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include implications to assist school districts with servicing students with disabilities.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those someone would experience in day-to-day life. There is a minimal risk that your participation in the study may become known to persons within the district. The data will be coded and the participants will remain anonymous.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Participation in research is voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate.

What happens if I say "Yes," but I change my mind later?

You may opt out of the study without consequence.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

All identifiable information will be eliminated from the data collection. The participants will be coded. If identifiers are removed from your identifiable private information or identifiable samples that are collected during this research, that information or those samples could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without your additional informed consent.

Data Sharing

Results from this study (without any of your personal information) may be shared with other researchers to advance science and health. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, to the best of our knowledge, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these precautions, there is always the remote risk that there could be a breach of confidentiality, but we will do our best to avoid that risk.

What else do I need to know?

An exception to our promise of confidentiality is when law or policy permits us in good faith to report evidence of child [or elder] abuse or neglect.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints talk to the Principal Investigator, Teresa K. Nagy @ [REDACTED]

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may contact the IRB Co-Chairs (Darrin Aase and Renee Thesis) at [REDACTED] if you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant. You may also contact the Director of Sponsored Programs and Research at [REDACTED].

Signature for Adult 18 or older

Signing here mean that you are agreeing (consenting) to participate in this research and that you are giving the researchers permission to use the information that they collect from your participation.

Signature of participant	Date
--------------------------	------

Printed name of participant

Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
---------------------------------------	------

Printed name of person obtaining consent