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A STORY OF HIGH SCHOOL INCLUSION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

by

Ann Marie McKee

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisors: Professor Jo M. Hendrickson
Assistant Professor Suzanne Woods-Groves

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic case study of the inclusion of a fifteen-year-old male with severe disabilities in general education classes in a four-year high school in a medium-sized Midwestern city. The study took place during the student's freshman and sophomore years. The investigator interviewed 17 of the participants in the student's inclusion; administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, and parents—accumulating over 450 pages of transcribed interviews in the process. She spent five days in field observation of the student's general education classes and other school activities—all recorded in substantial on-site notes—and had access to relevant documents concerning the student in the school's files. The NVivo 8 computer software was used to code the data.

A Story of High School Inclusion: An Ethnographic Case Study examines these questions: How did parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, state-level special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How did they characterize their attitudes toward it? What role did each of them play in preparing for the student's inclusion? How did each of them describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion? Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process?

All the participants interviewed in the study agreed with and supported the *idea* of inclusion; however, except for the parents, those expressions of agreement and

support were typically followed with a "but" that led on to a variety of reservations and qualifications. Preparation for the student's inclusion in high school was thorough, consisting in a series of comprehensive meetings involving all parties with a role in the student's inclusion—even to the point of seeking the input of those who had worked with the student in junior high school. During the day-to-day implementation of these plans, the student's general education teachers were pleased with his comprehension of, and participation in, the academic material. However, the paraeducator was often observed to be filling an instructional role that properly belonged to the qualified teacher. Moreover, her presence had a compromising effect on the student's social interactions. A two-way matrix was created to discover areas of agreement and disagreement among the parties to the student's inclusion. These rich data reveal that there was broad agreement among all the school participants, academic and administrative, but that strong tensions arose between the student's parents and the school personnel. These results suggest that families and schools may concur at a philosophical level regarding inclusion, but disagree at the implementation level, resulting in tensions and conflicts that might be prevented or ameliorated by more open and direct communication.

Abstract Approved:_____

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A STORY OF HIGH SCHOOL INCLUSION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D.THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Ann Marie McKee

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Linda Fielding

To Christopher, my husband,
whose unfailing patience and support
made this accomplishment possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In 1975 the U. S. Congress passed Public Law 94-142 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. This legislation establishes the guiding principles by which we define the education that we provide for children with disabilities in this country. An important provision of this federal law is the least restrictive environment (LRE) statement. The LRE clause states that

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, … are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily [IDEA, 1998, 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a) (5) (A)].

During the last three decades, through all of the subsequent reauthorizations of the law, the fundamental content of the LRE provision did not change. However, our understanding of the implementation of the LRE provision has changed. When Public Law 94-142 was first enacted the needs of children with disabilities were addressed by specialized programs (i.e., special education) primarily delivered separately from general education. Implementation of Public Law 94-142 was achieved by the placement of students with disabilities in a categorical "special" class or school (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Villa & Thousand, 2000). The LRE for children with disabilities could be a placement at any point along the continuum of services (i.e., residential or hospital placement, home instruction, special education day school, full-time placement in a

special class in a public school, a combination of general/special education classroom placement in a public school, full-time placement in a general education classroom) (Meyen & Skrtic, 1988; Downing, 2008).

In the early 1980's Madeleine C. Will, then Assistant Secretary for the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, said that there must be a better way of educating children with disabilities than a separate special education system with its separate classes and separate schools (Will, 1984; Will, 1986). Secretary Will spoke about the need to remove the barriers that exclude students with special needs from full integration into the life of the school. Will called for the establishment of partnerships in education—partnerships between states and the federal government, between states and the local districts, between regular and special educators, and between educators and parents. The purpose of these partnerships was to deliver coordinated educational services in regular school settings to all students, including those with special needs who were being served in separate programs. This federal policy, as outlined by Secretary Will, became known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI) (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). However, the REI did not specifically describe how to implement this merger of general and special education.

Two terms which are used to describe educators' attempts to provide access to the general education environment for children with special needs are *mainstreaming* and *inclusion*. *Mainstreaming* and *inclusion* are concepts from the professional literature that have never had formal (i.e., legal) definitions (Wright, 1999), but they are two terms which require definition. In *mainstreaming* (Downing, 2008; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Schulz & Carpenter, 1995) children with disabilities are

assigned to a special education classroom and special education teacher. The children usually join their same-age peers for lunch, recess, field trips, social activities, and some academic lessons. Each student's individualized education program (IEP) determines the percentage of his or her school day spent in the general education classroom.

Schulz and Carpenter (1995), as well as others (Downing, 2008; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Villa & Thousand, 2000), define *inclusion* as the delivery of services to children with disabilities who are assigned to an age-appropriate general education classroom and general education teacher in their neighborhood school. Special education is viewed as a support service for children with disabilities and their teachers. Children with disabilities may be removed from the general education classroom for individual or small group instruction in specific areas of need as determined by each student's IEP.

In addition to defining *mainstreaming* and *inclusion*, there is a philosophical and conceptual distinction between the two which must be clarified. Those who support the idea of *mainstreaming* (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Sorrelis, 2004; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000) believe that children with disabilities are best served in a special education setting where their needs can be directly addressed. Once the learning and/or behavioral deficits of the children with disabilities are remediated the children are believed to be able to benefit from placement in general education (Downing, Simpson, & Myles, 1990). Those who support *inclusion* (Falvey, 1995; Jorgensen, 2010; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Villa & Thousand, 2000) believe that children with disabilities belong in the general education classroom. Only after the full range of supports and services have been tried, and the IEP team determines that appropriate services cannot be

provided for the student with disabilities in the general education classroom, should the student be removed from the regular education environment.

Beginning with the REI and coinciding with an increasing emphasis on teaching students with disabilities in general education classrooms, many education professionals and parents of students with disabilities became advocates for the inclusion of their students in general education classrooms (Jorgensen, 2010; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang & Walberg, 1988). On the other hand, a number of education professionals and parents, for a variety of reasons, did not initially embrace the movement to include children and adolescents with disabilities in general education classrooms (Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten, Polsgrove, & Nelson, 1988; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988a; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988b). In short, when inclusion was first introduced it was not universally accepted. For the past two decades, both in the courts and in the professional literature, the issue of the efficacy of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms has been hotly debated.

Inclusion is Controversial

The parents and advocates for children with low-incidence disabilities or severe disabilities are the strongest proponents of inclusion. In order to achieve their goal of inclusion for children with low-incidence disabilities, they spoke of inclusion as being the best way to educate all children with disabilities (Downing, 2008; Jorgensen, 2010; Villa & Thousand, 2000). The parents and teachers of children with high incidence disabilities (e.g., mild intellectual disability, learning disability, behavioral disorder) did not necessarily agree that inclusion was the best way to ameliorate the deficits, and meet the

needs, of student with high incidence disabilities (Bouck, 2009, Fuchs et al., 2010, Kauffman, 2010).

There are five main points which proponents of inclusion raise when addressing the issue of inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. First, proponents claim that inclusion creates a positive school climate by providing for one school and one student body (A Product of the Working Forum on Inclusive Schools, 1994; Haager & Klingner, 2005). As Lipsky and Gartner (1997) stated, when students with disabilities are stigmatized by labeling and placement in a separate special class, it can have a negative impact on the school climate. The labeling and subsequent placement of students with disabilities in separate classes can create tensions between the students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, damage the self-esteem of the students with disabilities, and lower the teachers' expectations for the students with disabilities. When a two-tier system of education exists and students with disabilities are considered "less than" and "different from" their non-disabled peers this damages the school climate (Downing, 2008; Korinek, Walther-Thomas, & McLaughlin, 1999; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992; Ysseldyke et al., 2000).

Second, proponents argue that *all* students can benefit from inclusion. Students with disabilities in inclusive settings have been shown to receive more social support and have larger networks of non-disabled friends than students with disabilities in noninclusive environments (Carter, et al., 2007; Hughs & Carter, 2008; Kennedy, Shukla & Fryxell, 1997). Furthermore, researchers have found that the academic performance of students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms was equal to or greater than their peers in non-inclusive environments (Daniel & King, 1998; Ryndak et al., 2010; Salend

& Duhany, 1999). Students without disabilities also reported that they believe that friendships with students with severe disabilities are possible (Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta, Hamre-Nietupski, & Gable, 1996). Non-disabled students also stated that the friendships they have had with their peers with disabilities satisfied some of their personal needs (e.g., being viewed as important, recognizing their own strengths) (Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994).

A third argument in favor of inclusion is that inclusion is a basic human right. The rights argument is based on the view that human rights are the fundamental concern in the debate about inclusion. Those who argue in favor of inclusion maintain that the continuum of placements required by the federal regulations (Continuum of alternative placements, 1999) created to aid in the implementation of the IDEA is a form of segregation. They assert that it is a basic right of students with disabilities to have access to each and every education service available to other children (Cole, 1999; Downing, 2008; Falvey, 1995; Jorgensen, et al., 2010; Villa & Thousand, 2000).

A fourth rationale for inclusion is that students with disabilities need to be able to generalize their learning. A skill learned and practiced only in a special education setting, it is argued, is less likely to transfer to the general education environment, the child's home, or the community than the same skill learned in the general education environment with a variety of peers (Bruininks & Lakin, 1985; Haring, 1985; Ryndak & Alper, 1996). Fifth, it is argued that instruction in special education, when measured by academic achievement and social competence, is not necessarily better than the instruction in general education (Affleck, Madge, Adams, & Lowenbraun, 1988; Cole,

Waldron, & Massoumeh, 2004; Copeland & Cosbey, 2009; Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Rydak et al., 2010).

Education professionals and parents who oppose inclusion present five major arguments. First, opponents of inclusion note that the general education teacher follows a predetermined curriculum for each subject that is taught. IDEA requires that students with disabilities have learning goals prescribed by their individualized education program (IEP), and these IEP goals may or may not be addressed within the general education curriculum (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1996; Sorrelis, 2004). Second, it is argued that some students with disabilities need a specialized, highly structured environment. The smaller class size typical in the special education environment enables the special education teacher and the paraeducators who work with the children with disabilities specifically to address each student's behavioral and learning needs in an individualized manner (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1996; Webber & Scheuermann, 1997; Ysseldyke et al., 2000).

A third argument against inclusion is that the general education classroom is not always the appropriate setting for the student with disabilities. The student with disabilities may need to access specialized equipment available in a therapy room (e.g., for physical, occupational, or speech therapy), or the student may need to go to a workplace or community setting in order to fulfill his or her IEP goals (Brown et al., 1991). Clearly these settings are beyond the scope of the general education environment.

A fourth and frequently used rationale against inclusion is the belief that general education teachers and classrooms are not prepared to serve students with disabilities. The teachers are not trained and the classrooms are not properly and fully equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Byrnes, 2009; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1996;

Webber & Scheuermann, 1997). In addition, the general education teacher is already contending with a large class size (Noguera, 2004), the pressure for academic excellence (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998), at-risk students who need extra help and support (Manning & Baruth, 1996), and a classroom of learners with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Ferguson, 1995; Morse & Santos, 1995; Sorrells, et al., 2004). Thus, the general education teacher's ability to serve students with disabilities is likely to be compromised.

Fifth, opponents of inclusion argue that even the support services that are mandated by IDEA in order to make inclusion possible do not always materialize (Byrnes, 2009; Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, & Mellblom, 1992; Sorrells, et al., 2004). The general education teacher may need specialized curriculum materials, additional training, special education consultation, and paraeducator support, for example, to appropriately serve students with severe disabilities, yet the school districts are often unable or unwilling to provide those supports.

In summary, proponents of inclusion make five points: 1) inclusion can contribute to a positive school climate, 2) all students can benefit from inclusion, 3) inclusion is a basic human right, 4) students with disabilities need to learn and apply their skills in the general education environment to insure generalization of skills, and 5) instruction in special education does not necessarily produce better outcomes than instruction in general education. Opponents of inclusion respond with five major arguments: 1) the general education curriculum may not address the goals in the individualized education program, 2) some students with disabilities need a highly structured specialized environment, 3) the general education classroom may not provide the appropriate

environment within which to meet the student's IEP goals, 4) general education teachers are not prepared, or able, to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and 5) the support services mandated by IDEA are not always provided.

Clearly inclusion is controversial and complex. The inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms most likely would not have taken place if it were not for the legal decisions rendered in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Litigation Impacts the Inclusion of Students with Severe Disabilities

Students with severe disabilities often present unique challenges to the education system. Four legal decisions which have influenced the movement toward inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classes are discussed below. In *Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education* (1989) the Fifth Circuit Court found that Daniel, a six-year-old boy with Down Syndrome living in El Paso, Texas, could not be educated satisfactorily in the general education classroom. Nevertheless, the court established some important principles which have influenced placement decisions for students with severe disabilities. Four points from the Daniel v. Board decision are discussed below.

First, it was determined that the school must make accommodations and modifications in the general education classroom and the school district must provide the full range of supports and services needed by the student with disabilities. Second, the educational benefit from placement in a general education classroom includes the nonacademic benefit of having non-disabled peers for role models in the areas of behavior and language. Third, in Daniel v. Board, the court determined that the child with disabilities cannot disrupt the learning environment in the general education class either with disruptive behavior or excessive demands on the teacher's time. Fourth, this

case established that a combination of special and general education placement during academic and nonacademic activities must be attempted before a student with disabilities is placed in a self-contained special education class.

In another case, Christy Greer, a ten-year-old girl with Down syndrome, who was not disruptive and had made academic progress in the regular kindergarten, was placed in a self-contained special education classroom in first grade without the IEP team considering any alternative. Her parents took their California school district to court in *Greer v. Rome City School District* (1992) because they wanted her placed in a general education classroom. The 11th Circuit Court found that in IDEA Congress had created a statutory preference for educating children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. The court determined that the IEP team had not considered the whole range of supplemental aids and services before determining Christy's placement. The court found in favor of the parents.

Rafael Oberti, a boy with Down Syndrome, was eight years old when his New Jersey school decided, over the objections of his parents, that he would attend a special education class full time. In the case of *Oberti v. Board of Education* (1993) the 3rd Circuit Court stated that the school district had "not taken meaningful steps to include Rafael in a regular classroom with supplemental aids and services." The court determined that the "whole range of supplemental aids and services" included special training for the general education teacher, behavior modification programs, and curricular modifications, and that these services had not been provided. The court also stated that supplemental aids and services could include a full- or part-time paraeducator, if necessary, to accommodate the needs of the child with disabilities. The court concluded

that the student was not being educated in the LRE and that the school district could not base its decision to remove Rafael from the general education classroom on his behavior problems or lack of progress because the services provided were so clearly inadequate.

Rachel Holland, a girl with a cognitive disability, was eleven years old when her parents sought a placement for her in a general education classroom. Rachel was not disruptive and had made progress in social and communication skills in a general education classroom in a private school. Her parents wanted to place her in a general education classroom in their local public school. The public school was only willing to offer her parents a placement in a self-contained special education classroom.

Subsequently the parents sued the school district. In the case of the *Sacramento City Unified School Dis. v. Rachel H.* (1994) the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals stated that IDEA "establishes a preference for educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom." Ruling in favor of the parents, the court also concluded that Rachel's program could be implemented in the general education setting with "supplemental aids and services" involving some curriculum modification and the assistance of a part-time paraeducator.

Between 1989 and 1994 these four cases established a series of important legal precedents that have shaped the inclusion of <u>students with severe disabilities</u>. These are a) the school must make accommodations and modifications in the general education classroom before considering other placements, because IDEA created a statutory preference for educating children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers; b) the school district must provide the full range of supports and services needed by the student with disabilities, including but not limited to: special training for the general education

teacher, behavior modification programs, curricular modifications, and a full- or part-time paraeducator; c) the educational benefit from placement in a general education classroom includes the nonacademic benefit of having non-disabled peers for role models; d) the child with disabilities cannot disrupt the learning environment in the general education class either with disruptive behavior or excessive demands on the teacher's time; and e) a general education placement, or a combination of special and general education placement during academic and nonacademic activities, must be attempted before a student with disabilities can be placed in a self-contained special education classroom.

The legal precedents created by these court cases have made it possible to include children with severe disabilities in general education classrooms across the country. The courts' recognition of the nonacademic benefits of inclusion provided a rationale for the placement of students with severe disabilities in general education. The provision of the whole range of supplemental aids and services, including the possibility of a full- or part-time one-on-one paraeducator, have made the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classes an achievable goal. The determination by the courts that Congress (IDEA, 1997) created a statutory preference for the placement of children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers means that the IEP teams for children with severe disabilities must consider full- or part-time placement in the general education classroom for these students. Research on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities at the elementary school level provides some insights into what is possible for these students.

Inclusion of Elementary School Students with Severe Disabilities

Since the early 1990's qualitative and quantitative studies have supported the proposition that elementary school children with severe disabilities can achieve "satisfactorily" in general education schools and classes (Agran et al., 2010; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, & Palombaro, 1995; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994; Kennedy et al., 1997; Logan, Bakeman, & Keefe, 1997; Thousand & Villa, 2000). Even as research began to accumulate, many education professionals and parents concerned with the welfare of children with severe disabilities became convinced that these children should be included in general education classes (Ferguson, 1995; Jorgensen, 2010; Roach, 1995). Thus, the goal for children with severe disabilities, many of whom had previously been served in separate schools and classrooms, changed from being physically present in a local elementary school to the goal of social and academic inclusion in an age-appropriate general education classroom in their neighborhood school.

Bolstered by legal precedent established in the 1990s, and by IDEA 1997 with its mandate to provide supplementary aids and services (e.g., assistive technology, full- or part-time paraeducator) (Etscheidt & Bartlett, 1999), as well as parent advocacy, students with severe disabilities were increasingly placed in general education settings. Furthermore, the placement of the students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms was often judged to be successful as measured by quality of IEP goals (Hunt & Farron-Davis, 1992), educational achievement (Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1996; Kliewer & Biklen, 2002; Ryndak, Morrison, & Sommerstein, 1999), and social relationships (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995).

Inclusion of High School Students with Severe Disabilities

As elementary school children with severe disabilities matured and approached their middle- and high-school years, education professionals and parents observed that the children who had benefited from elementary school (K-8) inclusion might also benefit from being included in general education classes in their neighborhood high school. They argued that there would be improved outcomes for secondary students with severe disabilities if they were served in general education classes, including improved academic performance and better social relationships (Bauer & Brown, 2001; Copeland & Cosbey, 2009; Dymond et al., 2008; Fisher, Sax, & Pumpian, 1999; Jorgensen, 2010; Sage, 1997).

Although the momentum for inclusion of children with severe disabilities at the elementary school level was strengthened by research and clinical experience, there was little evidence to guide inclusion efforts for students with severe disabilities at the high school level. The process of including students with severe disabilities in general education high school classes has not been sufficiently studied so as to establish guidelines for practitioners (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Doré, Dion, et al. 2002; Ryndak, et al., 2009) . One approach to implementing inclusion for high school students with severe disabilities might be to examine successful elementary school inclusion. Unfortunately, elementary and secondary programs differ dramatically for a variety of reasons and the lessons learned about inclusion at the elementary level do not transfer directly to secondary education. Differences between elementary and secondary education are briefly discussed below.

Elementary School v. High School: Two Different Worlds

There are five major reasons why the template of elementary school inclusion

cannot be over-laid onto high school inclusion. First, compared to the elementary school, the culture of high schools is impersonal, hurried, hierarchical, and competitive (Doyle & Owens, 2003; Jorgensen, 2010). The students who are "the best" at something, when judged competitively against the performance of their classmates, are often the most valued (Bauer & Brown, 2001; Jorgensen, 2010). In contrast, elementary schools are generally nurturing; competitiveness in elementary school is balanced by a greater emphasis on community, cooperation, and belonging (Haberman, 1999). Understanding and promoting the growth of the whole child—physical, mental, and emotional—is the implicit, if not explicit, goal of elementary school education.

Second, most people envision adolescents with severe disabilities as having needs that are dramatically different than the needs of their non-disabled peers. For students with severe disabilities, a serious conflict exists between the need to learn functional life skills (e.g., transportation, work habits, purchasing goods and services) that lead to independence and the need to time spend time with non-disabled peers (Billingsley, 1993; Kliewer, 1999). By contrast, in the elementary school all the children are to some extent learning life skills (e.g., study habits, social skills, communication skills). For example, elementary school teachers line up the whole class to use the bathroom and remind everyone to wash his or her hands. If a fourth grade student with severe disabilities needs bathroom assistance, it would not be a major deviation from the normal classroom routine. Or, if two students are arguing, it is not unusual for the elementary school teacher to intervene, model good communication skills, and help the students amicably resolve their disagreement, because elementary school students are not expected to have the social skills of older students.

A third reason that the template of elementary inclusion does not fit high school is the belief of many educators and parents that the only acceptable goal for students in academic classes in high school is subject-specific knowledge (Fisher et al., 1999; Jorgensen, 2010). Teacher-education programs for secondary education focus on subject-specific knowledge and methods for teaching that particular content. At the elementary school the content of the curriculum is closer to the content recommended for students with severe disabilities and easier to adapt than high school course content (Ryndak & Alper, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1992).

A fourth factor that makes the lessons learned in elementary inclusion difficult to apply to high school pertains to the teaching methods used in high school—fast-paced lectures, note taking, memorization, and objective testing are the rule (Jorgensen, 2010, 1998). This makes it difficult to use the instructional strategies that have proven effective in elementary school inclusion: 1) supportive environments that allow errors and reward effort; 2) planning and changing instruction based on student outcomes; 3) methods that promote comprehension; 4) direct and systematic instruction of skills, explicit directions, modeling, guided practice, and reinforcement, and 5) activities designed to promote academic engagement and success of individual students (Harrell, Doelling, & Sasso, 1997). These instructional strategies are effective for students with severe disabilities as well as other elementary-aged children. However, such methods are not necessarily employed by high school special and general education teachers who are responsible for a large number of students daily, must cover a significant amount of curriculum material each semester or trimester, and must rely on test scores and grades to rank and place students (Bugaj, 1998; Bursuck & Munk, 1998; Lanford & Cary, 2000; Munk &

Bursuck, 2001).

A fifth reason why the elementary inclusion model does not generalize to high school inclusion is the scheduling of classes into 50-minute periods with a different teacher for each class. Students with severe disabilities respond well to the elementary school structure of one classroom-one teacher. When the elementary general education teacher works closely with the special educator, the needed support for the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities is provided (Bugaj, 1998). Collaboration and co-teaching between special and general educators at the high school level is a much more complicated process because of the nature of high school schedules (i.e., a day divided into 50-minute periods); often collaboration just does not happen (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Jorgensen, 2010).

Moreover, scheduling affects the social lives of students. Elementary school students with severe disabilities can have a social network of supportive classmates, seen on a daily basis for lessons, lunch, and playground periods. In high school their social network is scattered because their friends from elementary school now have classes and free periods that are different from theirs, and these change each semester or trimester (Bugaj, 1998; Jorgensen, 2010; Mu, Siegel, & Allinder, 2000).

To summarize, the template of elementary school inclusion cannot be overlaid onto high school inclusion because of five key factors: a) high school is more competitive and less nurturing; b) for students with severe disabilities a conflict exists between the need to pursue a functional curriculum and the need to be taught side-by-side with non-disabled peers; c) a major goal in high school is learning subject-specific knowledge; d) the instructional strategies that work for students with severe disabilities are seldom used

in high school classes; and e) the close-in support of non-disabled peers and the special education teacher, available in elementary school, may not be available in high school.

Education professionals and parents who are enthusiastic about including adolescents with severe disabilities in high school general education classes have little research-based knowledge and few guidelines for implementing inclusion at the secondary level. School administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, Area Education Agency (AEA) special education consultants, and parents (i.e., the members of the IEP team) hold key roles in the implementation of high school inclusion, yet little is known about how their goals and expectations—training and experience—and ultimately successes and failures—affect the implementation of high school inclusion for any given student. Until more is known about the roles of these IEP team members, their interactions, and other factors that may impact the implementation of the inclusion of students with severe disabilities at the high school level, it is difficult to formulate recommendations for inclusion. Although the research is sparse, several high school inclusion studies, discussed briefly in the following section, provide insight into the state of knowledge on secondary inclusion for students with severe disabilities.

Overview of the Research on High School Inclusion for Students with Severe Disabilities

The research on high school inclusion includes both quantitative and qualitative studies. These high school inclusion studies focus on three main issues: 1) academic benefit, 2) social integration of students with severe disabilities, and 3) the implementation process.

In research, using what Doré, Dion, Wagner and Brunet (2002) call a "multiple case study approach," the authors evaluated the implementation and benefits of inclusion in general education classes for two students with severe disabilities. The two students were first evaluated in a self-contained special education class and then transferred to general education on a full-time basis for the remainder of the school year. Observations across the year showed that after the transfer, the students displayed an improvement in classroom work skills as evidenced by more frequent engagement in learning activities while in the general education classroom than when they were in a special education class. The two students with severe disabilities frequent engagement in learning activities occurred with peer tutors, who were supervised by a paraeducator. This study also showed a slight increase in social interactions between the two students with severe disabilities and their general education peers; however, the overall social integration of the students with severe disabilities was unsatisfactory. Teachers of the students with severe disabilities evaluated the inclusion process as being satisfactory insofar as few modifications to class activities were required (Doré, Dion, Wagner, & Brunet, 2002).

In a literature review that focused on students with cognitive disabilities included in general education classes, Freeman and Alkin (2000) examined the results of 36 studies. All of the studies met five criteria, they 1) were published empirical studies, 2) involved only school age students (i.e., K-12), 3) included students with cognitive disabilities (i.e., mild to severe), 4) included two types of comparison studies – students with cognitive disability compared to non-disabled students in general education, and students with cognitive disability in general education settings compared to students with cognitive disability in special education settings, and 5) measured either social or

academic outcomes. Studies that compared the achievement of students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities in special education to similar students in general education showed that the more time the students with a cognitive disability spent in the general education classroom, the more positive the academic results, as determined by standardized tests. However, studies that compared children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom to their non-disabled peers found that the students with cognitive disabilities were not as socially accepted as their non-disabled peers. Diminished social acceptance seemed to be related to the differences in the behavior of the two groups, such as the level of disruptiveness. Freeman and Alkin (2000) concluded that lower social acceptance might be mitigated to some extent by training teachers; however, they did not indicate the type of training they would recommend.

Freeman and Alkin (2000) also noted that students with cognitive disabilities who were full time in general education programs appeared to be more socially competent and more accepted than the children who were in general education part time. The social acceptance of adolescents with cognitive disabilities was more negatively affected by partial inclusion than the social acceptance of younger children. Issues related to implementation of inclusion (e.g., curriculum and instructional modification, role of the IEP team) were not addressed in this review.

The results of the Freeman and Alkin (2000) review indicate one of the major problems in trying to understand high school inclusion; that is, the aggregated nature of much of the data (e.g., across ages, across levels of disability) does not allow one to draw conclusions specifically about high school students with severe disabilities and the implementation of inclusion. For example, only one of the studies out of the thirty-six

reviewed by Freeman and Alkin focused exclusively on high school students with severe disabilities. Their study looked at the social contacts of three high school students and found that general class participation (one period per day) increased the students' social contacts with non-disabled peers, provided nearly half of the non-disabled peers that they interacted with during the school year, and that their non-disabled peers became socially important to the students with disabilities (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994).

Kennedy and Itkonen's (1994) research and the Doré et al. (2002) multiple case study highlight another limitation of the research on high school students with severe disabilities included in general education classes; that is, the number of high school students with severe disabilities are very small – in the Kennedy study, n=3, and in the Doré study, n=2, for a total number of five students. The small number of students with severe disabilities in the research on high school inclusion is understandable because a severe disability is a low-incidence disability.

The small number of students with severe disabilities available for study is one reason some researchers have used a qualitative approach. Qualitative studies examining high school inclusion are available in the literature (Bauer & Brown, 2001; Bauer & Brown, 2001; Fisher & Frey, 2003; Fisher et al., 1999; Fisher, Sax & Pumpian, 1999; Jorgensen, 2010; Sage, 1997; Schnorr, 1997). These descriptions of high school inclusion tend to cast a rosy glow on each story of inclusion and do not go very deep in their analyses. When problems are acknowledged (e.g., lack of social interaction) the solutions are quickly supplied (e.g., circle of friends, peer buddies). On the other hand, the above case studies of successful high school inclusion *do* provide information and examples which show that high school inclusion for students with severe disabilities can

be successful; but the fact that each instance of inclusion has a professor (or professors) and/or school administrator guiding its successful implementation makes the examples atypical (Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999). It is also true that, while school reform and restructuring leading to systemic change, either building- or district-wide, may insure successful inclusion (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997), few instances of inclusion happen in this way. Most inclusion takes place on a case-by-case basis at the request of the parents and is implemented by the local education agency with the knowledge, skills, and resources it has available. None of the case studies described by the above-mentioned authors explores how the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of the IEP team members affect the more typical inclusion process; that is, all the case studies report situations in which a participant-observer researcher is present advocating for the student. Moreover, these high school inclusion studies do not examine the roles of the IEP team members in preparing for inclusion or the impact of the tensions and/or agreements among IEP team members.

In summary, it is difficult to gain a rich understanding of high school inclusion for students with severe disabilities because of the small numbers of high school students whose inclusion has been studied. All told, the researchers studied nine cases of high school inclusion: one high school in the Bauer and Brown study, three high schools in the Fisher et al. study, three high schools in the Sage study; and two high schools in the Fisher and Frey study.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to describe and analyze the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of the key participants in one case of high school

inclusion and to examine the individual roles of the education professionals and parents (i.e., the IEP team) during the first two years of high school inclusion for a student with severe disabilities in a high school that had never so fully included a student with severe disabilities. This case study will add to the existing literature because it compares and contrasts the viewpoints of the student's IEP team members over a two-year period for a total of 22 interviews. The audience for this study is general and special education teachers, administrators, special education consultants, and parents of children with severe disabilities. If in the analysis of the data it is found that conflicts occur between participants, it will be helpful to other IEP teams to realize that disagreements can, and probably will, occur. The resolution (or not) of these disagreements will offer insights into the process for other IEP teams, especially in schools without a prior history of inclusion. Agreements and synergies that surface in the data analysis will offer a positive model for other parents and educators interested in the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

I decided to use qualitative methodology, because it is best suited to my purpose, which was to capture the beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and roles of key participants and then provide an in-depth analysis of the impact that these factors had on the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in his local high school. In qualitative research it is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences. A key purpose of qualitative research is to understand the situation from the participants' perspective (Merriam, 2009). By analyzing the words and actions of these key participants I hoped to discover what synergies and/or tensions may exist between and among them and how these forces impacted the student's inclusion experience.

The questions which this study addressed relate to the adults involved and their experience of including a student with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school for the first time: 1) How do those key individuals, parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it? What role did each of them play in preparing for the student's inclusion? How did each of them describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion? 2) Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these tensions or alignments on the inclusion process?

I chose these research questions because the answers to these research questions should provide other IEP teams implementing the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities an opportunity to reflect on the process of inclusion from a wide range of perspectives. The more thoroughly each member of the IEP team understands the agenda and viewpoints of each of the other members, the greater the chance that the work of the IEP team will result in alignments rather than conflicts. In my review of the literature I have not found any research that addresses these research questions in this way, with this number of participants, over a two year period. I hope that this study will render general principles that will contribute to our understanding of high school inclusion and how to improve the implementation process.

Definitions

For the purpose of this thesis, the following definitions were used:

Area Education Agency (AEA) – The State is divided into12 regions. Each one is served by an area education agency (AEA). The AEA functions as an intermediate service unit and assists the State Department of Education in providing services and support to school districts and to schools. Each AEA provides special education support, media and technology support, instructional services, professional development, and leadership to the school districts and schools in its region (State of Iowa, State Department of Education, http://www.state.ia.us/educate/aea/index.html).

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – The IEP is defined in the IDEA 1997 as follows:

> The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed,
> reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section and that includes–
> (i) a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance, including –
> (I) how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum; or
> (II) for preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities;
> (ii) a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to–
> (I) meeting the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; and
> (II) meeting each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;
> (iii) a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child—
> (I) to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
> (II) to be involved and progress in the general curriculum in accordance with clause (i) and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
> (III) to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and non-disabled children in the regular class and in the activities described in clause (iii);
> (v)(I) a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of State or districtwide assessments of student achievement that are

needed in order for the child to participate in such assessment; and

(II) if the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular State or districtwide assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment), a statement of—

(aa) why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and

(bb) how the child will be assessed;

(vi) the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in clause (iii), and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications;

(vii)(I) beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced placement courses or a vocational education program);

(II) beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages; and

(III) beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of his or her right under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under Sec. 1415(m); and

(viii) a statement of—

(I) how the child's progress toward the annual goals described in clause (ii) will be measured; and

(II) how the child's parents will be regularly informed (by such means as periodic report cards), at least as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled children's progress, of—

(aa) their child's progress toward the annual goals described in clause (ii); and

(bb) the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. [IDEA 1997 1414 § (d)(1)]

Severe disabilities – The definition of severe disabilities emerged from an ongoing dialogue among professionals and family members about what terminology is most respectful but also descriptive. The term, *severe disabilities,* refers to a range of characteristics. First, it means that the individual has a moderate, severe, or profound intellectual disability (i.e., I. Q. score of 55 or below and below average functioning in at least two of the ten areas of adaptive behavior, e.g., daily living skills, communication). Second, a severe disability is present throughout a person's life. And third, the individual

has support needs that are limited (i.e., consistent but time-limited), or extensive (ongoing and not time-limited), or pervasive (i.e., provided at a high level throughout the day) (Kennedy & Horn, 2004).

Qualitative Research – is the systematic study of naturally occurring events and phenomenon in their contextual setting. The researcher is the research instrument. The data include transcripts of interviews, field notes taken during observations, and documents relevant to the context. The goal of data analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of the context and the events taking place within the context by seeing these events through the eyes of key informants (Merriam, 2009).

Quantitative Research – is structured and quantifiable (i.e., numbers are used in the process and form the results). This methodology seeks to prove or disprove a stated hypothesis through specific, detailed data collection (i.e., numerical) and statistical analysis (Minium, King & Bear, 1993).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An exhaustive review of the literature was performed. The goals of the literature review were: 1) to survey briefly the historical background of inclusive education and its original implementation in elementary school settings; 2) to analyze the differing perspectives of school administrators, state-level special education consultants, parents, general education and special education classroom teachers, and paraeducators on the meaning and implementation of inclusive education; and 3), more particularly, to examine the existing literature as it describes the implementation of high school inclusion for students with severe disabilities.

There are seven subsections in Chapter Two: Historical Perspective, Elementary School Inclusion, High School Inclusion, Parent Perspective, Teacher Perspective, Paraeducator Perspective, and Administrator Perspective. The Historical Perspective follows the progress of individuals with disabilities from pariah to inclusion. It focuses on how the law, both federal (e.g., Public Law 94-142; IDEA 1997, 2004) and case law (e.g., PARC v. Commonwearlth of Pennsylvania, 1971; Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon, 1993) ultimately made it possible for students with severe disabilities to be included in general education environments and classes. Each subsection which follows Historical Perspective -- Elementary School Inclusion, High School Inclusion, Parent Perspective, Teacher Perspective, Paraeducator Perspective, and Administrator Perspective --is a focused review of the literature on that topic. Each subsection ends with a summary of the findings and implications from that literature. Following these subsections is a general summary of the all the literature in the review.

Historical Perspective

This ethnographic case study focuses on the parents and educators of a student with severe disabilities who was the first student with significant disabilities to be included in his neighborhood high school. The inclusion process was impacted by over 25 individuals during a two-year period. The attitudes and perceptions of these people cannot be taken out of the historical context of the evolving perceptions of, and attitudes toward, individuals with severe disabilities and their inclusion in general education alongside students without cognitive disabilities.

The Historical Perspective follows the progress of individuals with disabilities from pariah to inclusion. It focuses on how the law, both federal (e.g., Public Law 94-142; IDEA 1997, 2004) and case law (e.g., PARC v. Commonwearlth of Pennsylvania, 1971; Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon, 1993) ultimately made it possible for students with severe disabilities to be included in general education environments and classes. For students with severe disabilities the road to being included alongside their nondisabled peers in general education classrooms has been long and rocky. Long before they were included, their right to receive any education at public expense had to be established. Parents of students with disabilities sought redress through the legal system, establishing over time that their children were entitled to an education. This advocacy by parents and others culminated in Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Passed in 1975, this federal legislation created the right to a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. Over the years, the Act was amended and renamed. (The last revision enacted by Congress is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 [IDEA 2004]). During

the 25 years after 1975, parents and advocates would return again and again to the courts to increase the inclusion of their children. First, *physically*, into the general education public school building; secondly, once in the building, *socially*, by gaining access to their nondisabled peers for purposes of behavior and language modeling; and finally, *academically*, through gaining access to the general education curriculum.

The history of people with severe disabilities, whether cognitive, physical, or both, reflects an ambivalence which was felt toward them by the non-disabled population. The very earliest accounts of disability display an attitude of either horror and repulsion or one of awe (Scheerenberger, 1983). The history of the education of children and youth with severe disabilities in the United States mirrored an attitude of horror and repulsion. For example, in 1919 a young man with cerebral palsy, who had a physical disability but did not have a mental disability, applied to be admitted to a school attended by his siblings and friends. The school refused to admit him and the case was ultimately decided by the State Supreme Court of Wisconsin. The court agreed with the school administrators and declared that his "physical condition and ailment produces a depressing and nauseating effect upon teachers and school children" (*State ex rel. Beattie v. Board of Education*, 169 Wis. 231 [1919]).

As the twentieth century progressed, having a disability became a less stigmatizing experience than the Wisconsin case just described. However, individuals with disabilities had to turn to the law and the courts in order to have the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Prior to the enactment of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), in 1975, students with disabilities continued to be excluded from the public schools even though

all the states had compulsory education laws by 1918 (Yell, Rogers, et al., 1998). If students with disabilities received any education, it was provided in a separate school or institution away from their non-disabled peers. In some school districts students with milder disabilities might be provided with an education in the public school in a separate classroom, but this was far from universal and was at the discretion of the individual communities (Scheerenberger, 1983). In the first part of the twentieth century the parents of a child with an obvious disability would be encouraged to place their child in an institutional setting (Kingsley & Levitz, 1994). These settings were residential in nature and the "education" of the child would consist of training in the skills needed for daily living and work—that is, if it was an exemplary facility. This was the primary resource provided by the state and available to parents. If the parents wished to keep their child at home, they relied on their own resources and created "schools" for their children. Sometimes the school was funded by a charitable organization, sometimes by the parents themselves. During the twentieth century grassroots organizations of parents and educators, (e.g., The National Association for Retarded Citizens [now ARC/USA], The Council for Exceptional Children [CEC]) began to agitate for increased state and federal support for the education of students with disabilities. These organizations brought their case before state and federal courts (Yell, Rogers, et al., 1998).

Some would argue that the first case which addressed the issue of inequity in public education was the famous *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education*. In 1954 the United States Supreme Court heard a case which debated the legality of educating African-American children in separate schools. The court ruled that maintaining separate school facilities for African-American children violated their civil rights because separate

could not be equal. During the next 50 years advocates for children with disabilities would maintain that the ruling in *Brown v. Topeka* could logically be extended to include all minority groups (e.g., students with disabilities).

Before that could happen, the efficacy of educating children with disabilities had to be established. In 1971, after hearing extensive expert testimony during the case of *Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, the court established that *any* student with a cognitive disability was entitled to and could benefit from an education. Shortly thereafter, in *Mills v District of Columbia Board of Education* (1972), the District of Columbia claimed that it was not educating students with disabilities because it lacked the funds. The court ruled that a lack of funds was not a valid reason for denying students with disabilities an education. The court cited *Brown v. Topeka*, "education is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms." Thus the District of Columbia was ordered to spend whatever funds they had equally among all students. This 1972 decision extended the right to an education to *all* students with *any* level of disability. Although this case law established the principle that the states must fund the education of children with disabilities, it did not establish where or how this education would take place. In places where separate schools for students with disabilities already existed, the state simply became the funding source for these schools. Where separate schools did not exist, the state created them. For the education of students with milder disabilities, the state established separate classrooms within public school buildings to meet the needs of those individuals (Scheerenberger, 1983).

By 1975 advocates for students with disabilities had succeeded in influencing federal legislation. The United States Congress passed Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This federal law provided a mechanism for identifying and providing educational services to children with disabilities. The key provisions of the law, which have remained constant over time, included such elements as a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), an individualized education program (IEP), and a nondiscriminatory evaluation. In addition, Public Law 94-142 delineated disability categories (e.g., mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, and serious emotional disturbance) and described the process by which a child could qualify for special education services. Parents' rights were established by Public Law 94-142, including due process (i.e., they can hire a lawyer and take the school district to court if the school district does not follow the law) and the parents' right to be involved in the steps of the identification of the child as being disabled, as well as the determination of the disability category, and the education process. States are required to identify children with disabilities (child find) and cannot refuse to educate any child who enrolls in school (zero reject). The school district is responsible for providing not only educational services, but also any related service (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation) which the IEP team determines is necessary in order for the child to benefit from his or her education.

In 1990 when Public Law 94-142 was reauthorized, Congress again established federal policy concerning the education of, and early intervention for, infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. The law was expanded to include transition services (i.e., a coordinated set of goals for the student with disabilities that promotes movement

from school to post-school activities, including employment). The name of Public Law 94-142 was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the language of the act was changed to reflect "people first" terminology (i.e., the use of the disability label to *describe* rather than *define* the student), and to use the word *disability* rather than *handicap* throughout the text.

In 1997 the IDEA was again reauthorized by Congress. This reauthorization included many changes that are important to the special education process. Several key changes were made to the requirements for the individualized education program (IEP). The IEP placed more emphasis upon involving students with disabilities in the general curriculum and in the general education classroom, with supplementary aids and services as appropriate. A new requirement for the IEP was included. Thereafter, the IEP must explain the extent to which the student with disabilities *will not* be participating with his/her non-disabled peers in the general education class and in extracurricular and non-academic activities. The reauthorization also required the membership of the regular education teacher on the IEP team if the student is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment. The law further requires that a student's transition needs be addressed in the IEP beginning at age 14. Parents are included as members of the team that decides a student's eligibility for special education and related services. The law also clarified the involvement of parents in placement decisions.

Every student who qualifies for special education services has an individualized education program. The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' means a written statement for each student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with Section 1414 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA). The IEP includes statements of the student's present levels of educational performance; of measurable annual goals including short term objectives; of special education and related services including supplementary aids and services for school personnel as well as the student; an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will *not* participate in general education classes and activities with his/her non-disabled peers; and a transition plan (for students over 14) to facilitate the movement of the adolescent from high school into adult life. This document is written by the members of the IEP team. The IEP team includes the parents of the student with a disability, at least one regular education teacher, at least one special education teacher, a representative of the local education agency, an individual who can interpret the results of educational and behavioral assessments, and other individuals that have special expertise, such as related service personnel. The student with a disability takes part in the portion of the IEP team meeting during which the team discusses the student's transition program. The IEP team meets at least once a year to review and revise the individualized education program.

Since 1975, when Public Law 94-142 became law, the interpretation of the provision which provides for the education of the child with disabilities in the least restrictive environment has been a hotly contested issue. This is the LRE provision of IDEA:

> Each public agency must ensure (1) that to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are non-disabled; and (2) that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily [IDEA, 1998, 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)(A)].

Because of this paragraph in the law the questions became: When is it appropriate to educate a student with disabilities in the regular education classroom? When is the nature or severity of the disability such that the child must be removed from the regular education environment? What are supplementary aids and services and how are they used? How does one define an appropriate education? These are all questions which each IEP team must address when they determine placement and the provision of supplementary aids and services.

Four federal court cases, *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education* (1989), *Greer v. Rome City School District* (1992), *Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon* (1993), *Sacramento City School District v. Rachel H.* (1994), attempted to deal with these questions. The outcomes significantly influenced the move toward greater inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classes. In *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education* the Fifth Circuit Court stated that Congress in enacting PL 94-142 had created a "strong preference" favoring mainstreaming. The court's decision focused on four issues: 1) the school must make accommodations and modifications in the general education classroom and the school district must provide the full range of supports and services needed by the student with disabilities; 2) the educational benefit for the individual, including the nonacademic benefit of access to role models in the areas of behavior and language; 3) the potentially disruptive effect of having the student with a disability in the general education class; and 4) a combination of special and general education placement during academic and nonacademic activities must be attempted before a student with disabilities is place in a self-contained special education class. In *Greer v. Rome City School District* the 11th Circuit Court emphasized that "the whole

range of supplemental aids and services" available to the district for the support of the general education placement must be considered *before* the district could determine that the placement did not work. In *Oberti v. Board of Education* the 3rd Circuit Court determined that the school district had "not taken meaningful steps to include Rafael in a regular classroom with supplemental aids and services." The court went on to state that the provision of supplemental aids and services includes a full or part-time paraeducator, if necessary, to accommodate the special needs of a child with a disability or disabilities. In *Board of Education v. Rachel Holland* the 9th Circuit Court stated that IDEA "establishes a preference for educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom." The court concluded that the student's individualized education program could be implemented in the general education classroom with supplemental aids and services involving some curriculum modification and the assistance of a part-time paraeducator.

By the mid to late 1990s, when parents of students with severe disabilities requested placement for their child in a general education classroom, legislation and case law supported that request. Furthermore, the provision of supplementary aids and services, including a full- or part-time paraeducator, curriculum modifications and accommodations provided within the regular class, additional training for the regular educator, and the support of special education consultants became increasingly common.

The legislative initiatives that began with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) and culminated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446) require that schools serve students with disabilities with their general education classmates to the "maximum extent

appropriate." Increased participation of students with disabilities within the general curriculum is also implicit in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

Not all researchers believe that full inclusion in general education academic classes is in the best interest of students with disabilities. Citing previous literature (e.g., Billingsley, 1999; Kliewer, 1999) Bouck (2009a) observed that there is a disjuncture between current federal policies as embodied in NCLB and IDEA and the needs of students with cognitive disabilities. The author believes that the latter are best served by a functional curriculum. Components of a functional curriculum include the functional application of skills from the core subject areas (academics), vocational education, community access, daily living, finances, independent living, transportation, social relationships, and self-determination. Snell (1997) suggested that functional curricula were developed to help students with severe disabilities acquire the adaptive skills needed in life, skills that they did not possess and would not develop unless explicitly taught.

There is a concern among some secondary school special educators that too many high school students with disabilities are not receiving a curriculum that prepares them for independent living or gives them the necessary skills to be successful after high school. Bouck describes the Youth Transition Program which was recognized as an exemplary school-to-work transition model by the U.S. Department of Education. The Youth Transition Program provided services for special education students in their last two years of high school (e.g., functional academics, vocational, independent living, and work experience) and involved transition planning based on post-school goals and self-determination. A two-year follow-up service component was provided on an as needed basis. On average, students in the Youth Transition Program were shown to have higher

graduation rates and better post-school outcomes than their peers without the benefit of this program. However, Bouck does not tell us what sort of program the students with severe disabilities had, who did not have the Youth Transition Program. Bouck suggests there is a mismatch between federal legislation and a functional curriculum—a mismatch that includes curricular components and setting, accountability and assessment, highly qualified teachers, and scientifically-based practices.

In 2009b Bouck reviewed ten commercially available functional curriculum models designed for secondary students with cognitive disability. The study is timely because of NCLB, with its emphasis on outcomes and teacher accountability. The author asks: What educational programming best meets the need for successful post-school outcomes for students with cognitive disabilities? She devised a four-column matrix to compare the ten curriculums under these rubrics: 1) basic characteristics of the curriculum; 2) extent to which it adheres to current best practices; 3) inclusion of the six domains of adulthood; and 4) quality of materials in the curriculum. Her conclusion was that none of the curriculums reviewed adequately addressed the life-skill needs of secondary students with cognitive disabilities. Appropriate curriculum models have yet to be developed. While the absence of functional curricula within the educational programs for students with severe disabilities remains a concern of high school special educators, research documenting the social, academic, and behavioral benefits associated with inclusion in general education classes has accumulated steadily.

Since 1975 there has been a steady expansion of the rights of children with severe disabilities to be included in general education settings. This expansion of rights has come entirely in the form legislation at the national level and, when challenged, has been

sustained by the federal courts. The foregoing discussion has included the two most recent federal laws affecting the education of children with severe disabilities: No Child Left Behind (2001) and IDEA (2204). It must be noted, however, that both these laws had not yet been enacted when the field work for the present study was conducted, and the high school in which this study was conducted cannot be held accountable for as-yet-not-enacted requirements.

How have these legislative and court directives been implemented? And what has been their effect on the day-to-day education and the real-world lives of students with severe disabilities?

Elementary School Inclusion

The movement towards inclusion focused initially on students with disabilities in elementary education classrooms and the research base on elementary school inclusion is large. Although this literature did not impact the present study directly, the perceived success of elementary school inclusion led to the extension of inclusion into the high school. Here are several typical examples of research on elementary school inclusion.

In 1997 two groups of middle school students with severe disabilities were studied across one school year by Kennedy, Shukla, and Fryxell. One group of students participated full time in general education classrooms. The members of the other group were placed in special education classrooms. Using a post-test only control group design with matched comparisons, each student's social interactions, social support behaviors (e.g., greetings, emotional support, accepting help with decisions) and friendship networks were measured. The results indicate substantive social benefits for the general education group relative to students who were placed in special education classrooms.

Students in the general education group interacted more frequently with their non-disabled peers, provided and received higher proportions of social support, and had larger and more durable networks of non-disabled peers.

The results of this study should be viewed with caution because the number of participants in each group was only eight students. However, it does follow a consistent pattern of results seen in other studies done in elementary school—Hunt, Staub, et al. (1994) and Fryxell and Kennedy (1995)—and in numerous studies done in preschools. Another limitation is that, while these studies focus on the quantity of social interactions, they do not describe the quality of those interactions.

Hunt, Soto, Maier, and Doering (2003) investigated the effectiveness of a general education/special education collaborative teaming process on the academic and social participation of six students in general education classrooms. Three of the participants were students with severe disabilities and three of the participants were considered academically at risk. Participants were in the fourth grade. The study took place at two elementary schools located in the San Francisco Bay area.

The IEP teams for each student included the general education teacher, the inclusion support teacher, the child's parents, and the instructional assistant assigned to each classroom. In addition, for two of the students, a speech therapist joined the team. Each team developed and collaboratively implemented individualized Unified Plans of Support (UPS) consisting of academic adaptations, and communication/social supports.

Data collection procedures used a combination of sources, including systematic observation of levels of engagement and the interaction patterns of the students. A multiple baseline design across pairs of students (one student at risk, one student with

disabilities) was employed. Team interviews were done to elicit team members' perspectives on the academic growth and social participation of the students. Two interviews were conducted, one interview before intervention and one at the end of the intervention condition. Levels of engagement and interaction patterns were measured using an Interaction and Engagement Scale created by the researchers. Each pair of students was observed approximately for two hours once a week for five months.

The patterns of change in academic performance were assessed by the IEP team members. Behaviors that were present across all students included increased effort to learn and participate, increased reliance on peer support, increased academic productivity, increased persistence when tackling difficult tasks, increased motivation to participate, and increased pride in academic accomplishment.

Results showed a consistent implementation of UPS, developed through a collaborative team process, increased the students' engagement in classroom activities. There was also an increase in social interactions initiated by the students. A major limitation of this study was the lack of the financial resources needed to provide support for the general education/special education collaborative efforts required to implement the UPS model school wide.

In the Agran, Wehmeyer, et al. (2010) study the subjects were three junior high school students with cognitive (and in one case behavioral) disabilities. The junior high schools were located in two adjoining school districts. The researchers asked: Did the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction promote active engagement in general classroom education and access to the general education curriculum? Observation was used to determine the answer. Positive changes were reported for all students. The study

adds to the growing research literature which suggests that self-determination or student-directed learning strategies—and the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction specifically—can promote access to the general curriculum for students with significant support needs.

The research literature on elementary school inclusion for students with severe disabilities, surveyed briefly here, is uniformly positive. It documents gains in academic achievement as well as increased social interactions for students with disabilities when they are included in general education settings. The literature survey observed no data-based studies reporting negative outcomes. Kennedy (1997) studied 16 students with severe disabilities. Hunt (2003) focused on three students with severe disabilities and three students who were academically at risk. Agran (2010) included two students with cognitive disabilities and one student with behavior disorders. It is always a concern when the numbers of students in each study are small, but because these studies focus primarily on students with low-incidence disabilities that is a limitation that is difficult to overcome. This limitation is mitigated by the sheer number of studies on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in elementary school.

High School Inclusion

This subsection of the literature review contains five studies: Carter, et al, 2005; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Ryndak, et al, 1999; Ryndak, et al., 2010a; and Ryndak, et al., 2010b. The Ryndak studies use qualitative research to look at the benefits of inclusion for individuals with severe disabilities. Her first study (1999) has one subject. Her second study (2010a) looks at the outcomes of special education for two subjects, one of whom was included and one who was not. And her third study (2010b) has two subjects who

are brothers, one of whom has severe disabilities and is included and the other with milder disabilities is not. Freeman & Alkin (2000) reviewed 378 studies; all subjects have cognitive disabilities and the ages range from kindergarten through 12th grade. Carter (2005) had 16 subjects with severe disabilities and focused on opportunities for socialization in high school.

As students with disabilities who had been successfully included in elementary education classrooms grew older and began to age out of the elementary grades, parents of these children naturally turned their hopes and their attention on extending the benefits of inclusive education to the high school years. This high school inclusion movement, and researchers' interest in it, developed a number of years after the elementary school inclusion effort. Consequently, the literature on high school inclusion is smaller, more recent, and less well developed than that on inclusion during the elementary years. An added difficulty is the tendency for some researchers to cross over the divide between elementary school and high school, conducting studies that include age ranges that take in both elementary and high school subjects. In most cases the data are presented without differentiation among the subjects. In such studies it is not possible to tease out the data that apply only to high school students.

An additional problem is the use of terminology that does not adequately distinguish among students with different disabilities, students with cognitive disabilities, and students with severe disabilities. Because of the limited number of studies addressing inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education high school classes, I have included in this section of the literature review *any* study which incorporates high school students with cognitive disabilities.

Social interaction with peers can positively impact the intellectual and social development, as well as the behavioral functioning, of all adolescents. These benefits have been documented in adolescents with disabilities as well as in non-disabled adolescents. Both educational researchers and federal policy promote the desirability of social interaction with non-disabled peers for students with disabilities.

Ryndak, Morrison, and Sommerstein (1999) developed a case study that described one young woman with moderate to severe disabilities and her use of literacy (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking skills) during her ten years in a self-contained special education classroom and subsequently during the seven years of her inclusion in general education classes in middle school, high school, and college. Because of a lack of academic progress, low expectations of staff, and an increase in inappropriate behavior during the subject's years in the self-contained classroom, her parents decided that being in a general education classroom would provide her with more opportunities to learn and develop. The first author of the study observed the young woman across school settings, at home, and in the community. Educationally relevant documents from the student's file (e.g., samples of her work across content areas, test scores, narrative reports) were reviewed as well as records maintained by her parents of meetings and conversations with school personnel. Interviews were conducted with her current service providers (e.g., special education, speech therapy, occupational therapy), the building principal, and the district director of special education. Conversations with the young woman and her parents occurred almost daily for four months. Formal interviews were conducted with each of her parents. The author attended two meetings with the IEP team responsible for her placement and program. The parents requested an inclusive placement in their

daughter's neighborhood school; consequently she began her placement general education in seventh grade during the final month of school that year.

The parents requested that the author remain involved and document their daughter's progress. Prior to inclusion the student received all of her special education services in a self-contained class; she was mainstreamed for chorus or gym. Speech and occupational therapy were isolated activities unrelated to life activities or curriculum. There were no team meetings or planning for coordinated instructional activities across people or settings. During this time, materials used in her special education class were age inappropriate (e.g., kindergarten and first grade worksheets). She remained at the second grade reading level for three consecutive years while her reading program went over the same material and used the same methods each year. She had the receptive vocabulary of a six-year-old and the oral vocabulary of a three-year-old. Over the years prior to inclusion there was a marked regression in her use of written forms of literacy. The members of the IEP team reported that because she had a low IQ she would not be able to increase her literacy skills beyond her current level of achievement.

Her behavior deteriorated in the self-contained setting as well. First, she exhibited different behaviors when in the self-contained class than when she was in class with her non-disabled peers. In her self-contained class she was off-task and refused to work independently, but when she was with her non-disabled peers she was consistently on-task and attempted to do everything her peers did. Second, when she was asked to do any task that required reading or writing she would respond with inappropriate behaviors. Third, she would periodically "fall apart" and yell and refuse to cooperate or completely shut down.

During her seven years of inclusion this student made significant progress in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The focus of her IEP goals shifted from being centered on isolated skills taught in the self-contained class to emphasizing the use of skills acquired in general education and community settings that were meaningful to her. Each year of inclusion an education team was formed to plan instructional content, develop modifications, and to implement and evaluate instruction. The special education teacher's role became that of a consultant. Goals for speech and occupational therapy were integrated into the regular education content and environment. The student's parents were very active in the development of strategies and modifications for use in the general education environment. The goal of the modifications was to maximize her use of her current skills, give her an opportunity to learn new skills, and increase her independence.

After being exposed to the role models provided by her non-disabled peers, she began to exhibit appropriate behaviors that replaced the inappropriate ones that she had exhibited in the self-contained classroom. During the seven years that she was included her use of literacy developed in many ways. The student demonstrated tremendous growth in verbal articulation and vocabulary. Her written expression improved dramatically as she took notes in class using an outline. By the time she was in her second year of auditing college courses her educational team determined that she was reading material written at a seventh grade level with complete comprehension.

This case study shows how one student with severe disabilities benefited both socially and *academically* from inclusion in general education classes even though the ostensible goal of inclusion for such students is the development of social skills. The

obvious limitation of this study is that it looked at only one student. However, a bigger issue is the outside assistance that this inclusion placement received from the author, a professor of education, and the student's parents, both of whom are well educated and available to assist with the development of modifications and effective strategies to enable their daughter to succeed. Any parents reading this research could easily want the same result for their child with a severe disability, but they may not have access to the same resources to devote to their child's education.

Freeman and Alkin (2000) reviewed 378 articles which looked at the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The majority of the research reviewed illustrated that students with cognitive disabilities who had experienced some level of inclusion scored significantly higher on the researchers' target variable (i.e., social or academic outcomes) than did students with cognitive disabilities who spent all their time in a self-contained special education class.

Two quantitative studies examined the academic outcomes of students with cognitive disabilities versus typically developing children. Students with cognitive disabilities performed at an academically lower level. Nine quantitative studies all used a sociometric or social acceptance scale administered to children in general education classrooms. Sociometric ratings of the child with cognitive disabilities were compared to the sociometric ratings of the typically developing children in the classroom. The students with cognitive disabilities in these studies spent at least some time in the general education classroom. To some degree, all nine studies found that students with cognitive disabilities do not receive as high a social acceptance rating as the typically developing children. All nine studies were examined by Freeman and Alkin to determine what other

variables might contribute to social status ratings. The authors found that the following factors did not relate to acceptance levels: the presence of other students with cognitive disabilities or urban versus suburban settings. However, the acceptance of students with cognitive disabilities and aberrant behavioral characteristics was rated lower than students with cognitive disabilities but without behavioral issues. Accepted students displayed a higher level of social behavior and a lower level of sensitive isolated behavior. The accepted children chose friendly submissive goals over friendly assertive goals in social problem-solving situations.

Five studies examined the full-time placement of students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. Two of these studies provided fairly positive results for the inclusive setting. These studies provided additional insights about the positive findings. The extent inclusion seems to be associated with more positive results (i.e., more acceptance and social interactions) correlates with greater levels of inclusion. The second of the two full-inclusion studies examined a number of academic variables as well as the social ones. Significant positive results for the students with cognitive disabilities were found in understanding numbers and in verbal comprehension.

The next set of studies examined the level of social interaction between two groups of students with cognitive disabilities. One group was placed part time in the general education classroom. The second group was integrated only on the playground. A total of 245 students participated in both settings. Generally the level of interaction with typically developing children depended on each child with cognitive disabilities' level of inclusion. However, the outcomes were so variable that the authors concluded

that individual characteristics of the subjects contributed so strongly to the variation in outcome that setting effects could not be identified.

Fourteen within- and between-group studies compared social outcomes for students with cognitive disabilities in a variety of education settings. Five studies examined the social development of students with cognitive disabilities who were fully integrated in general education classrooms. Compared to special education students, the fully included students with cognitive disabilities had more reciprocal interactions with non-disabled peers, and they initiated more social interactions with others. In these studies no clear information was provided as to the size of the classrooms; the evaluation measurements took place only during a one- or two-day period.

In the five studies that examined the social interactions of students with cognitive disabilities that were part-time in the general education classroom, the findings were inconclusive. The ages of the students with cognitive disabilities varied widely. This limited the relevance of the findings.

In one study part-time inclusion in general education classes increased the child with cognitive disabilities' social contacts with non-disabled peers—including more durable and frequent contacts. This study is limited in that the social situations were arranged by school personnel.

In another two studies it was found that the students with cognitive disabilities in general education classrooms had significantly more social contacts and interaction with non-disabled peers than did the students in the special education class. Both studies employed strong measurements of the level of integration and number of social contacts. However the studies were very small in size and there were nonsignificant differences in

the perceived quality of the interactions of the child with cognitive disabilities when interacting with a non-disabled versus a disabled peer.

The final study in this group of 14 studies examined by Freeman and Alkin (2000) showed no significant differences in social acceptance and socials interaction on the playground when three groups of children were compared: children with cognitive disabilities who had some degree of inclusion; those with cognitive disabilities who were placed full-time in a special education classroom; and their non-disabled peers. This study did not specify how much time the students with cognitive disabilities who were not fully included spent in the general education classroom. The authors' general conclusion was that, when each group of the three groups of children was examined for social competence, and the social competence of the children with cognitive disabilities is judged on such variables as engagement, interaction, adjustment and contact, most of the results document the benefits of some level of inclusion.

The examination of academic outcomes within these studies shows that the amount of time in the general education setting distinguishes the more positive findings from the nonsignificant ones. Higher academic gains are shown when students with cognitive disabilities are more fully integrated into the general education classroom.

The qualitative and quantitative studies in this synthesis yielded different conclusions. The qualitative studies showed a strong correlation between increased inclusion and increased social and academic gains for the student with disabilities. The quantitative studies did not uniformly show the same positive correlation. A simple explanation could be the average-case versus best-case issue. Most quantitative studies

focus on the average score of a group of children, lessening the effects of exceptionally positive or negative cases. Qualitative studies tend to focus on a best-case scenario.

Overall the research on high school inclusion uses such variation in terminology that it is often difficult to understand the severity of the disabilities of the children to whom the phrase *students with cognitive disabilities* is being applied. The second limitation also relates to terminology and involves the academic-outcome variable. Caution must be exhibited in interpreting academic outcomes especially for older students. Some academic curricula for students with cognitive disabilities at the junior high and high school level may be more functional in nature and thus may not be comparable to general education academic curricula.

A third limitation regarding the studies using both within- and between-group designs relates to the appropriateness of comparing the social and academic performances of students with cognitive disabilities and their peers without disabilities. A final limitation relates to the interpretation of the studies on social competence. In some cases these observations were made by the researchers, but in other cases school personnel were the only source of the data. Individual-reported data of events requiring subjective analysis of behavior can be influenced by the observer's bias. A better approach is to incorporate several observers, including someone who is not personally involved.

In a quantitative study using an observational method, Carter, Hughes, Guth, and Copeland (2005) studied a high school that employed a Peer Buddy System. Under this system non-disabled peers/student volunteers received academic credit for receiving preparatory training and for working closely with included students with severe disabilities. Sixteen students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities were the

subjects of the study; 10 of the 16 had a secondary disability. Although other studies have shown that "the more inclusion–the more social interactions" between students with severe disabilities and their non-disabled peers (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Kennedy, Shukla, & Fryxell, 1997) Carter (2005) discovered that the quantity and quality of disabled/non-disabled social interactions did ***not*** increase when students with severe disabilities were placed in high school settings with their non-disabled peers. When these social interactions did increase it was the result of the peer buddy being in close proximity to his or her partner with severe disabilities and when the peer buddy encouraged/supported such interactions. Carter (2005) also concluded that absent positive steps—such as a peer-buddy system or active teacher intervention—the simple presence of students with severe disabilities in a larger group of non-disabled peers will not, by itself, promote greater social interaction between individuals from the two groups: "Unless educators take deliberate steps to facilitate social interaction among students with and those without severe intellectual disabilities … it is unlikely to occur."

As a follow-up to their research Hughes and Carter have published a book, *Peer Buddy Programs for Successful Secondary School Inclusion* (2008), which explains in detail how to establish a service-learning peer buddy program. Non-disabled peers can earn service learning credit by engaging in a variety of activities (e.g., academic classes, lunchrooms, hallway transitions, extracurricular activities) with their peers with disabilities that lead to friendship rather than the instructor-tutee relationship typical of peer-tutor programs. Section One provides a rationale for peer buddy programs as a means to promote inclusion and community membership in high schools. In Section Two the authors outline the steps for setting up a peer buddy program, roles of peer buddies,

and provide forms for planning and implementing the program activities. The third section describes strategies for maintaining and evaluating the program.

Ryndak, Ward, Alper, Montgomery, and Storch (2010a) published a study which addressed the impact of high school inclusion versus special education class placement on two individuals after high school. These two individuals were in the same self-contained special education classroom during middle school. After middle school the female transitioned into all general education classes in high school and the young man remained in a self-contained setting.

At 25 years of age each of these individuals (and his/her parents/legal guardians) was approached by the researchers to determine whether they would participate in a study about a) the participant's educational experiences and performance during their school years; b) the participant's life immediately after exiting school services; and c) the participant's current life. The two individuals and their guardians agreed to participate in a qualitative case study that reviewed documents relevant to their experiences and to being interviewed and observed by the researchers. The findings compare descriptors of each individual at four points in his or her life:

1) in a self-contained special education class for three documented years;
2) after six years of education in an inclusive or segregated setting;
3) after four years of adult living;
4) after eight years of adult living.

At point one: The female student observed in self-contained special education class walks with a shuffling gait, needs a high level of supervision, demonstrates low maturity level, is disruptive in self-contained class, and is regressing academically.

The male student in self-contained class exhibits age-appropriate appearance and behaviors, requires a moderate level of supervision, demonstrates a moderate maturity level, is not disruptive in segregated class, and participates willingly in academic activities.

At point two: The female student walks with an air of self-confidence, works independently, demonstrates an excellent level of emotional growth during high school and college years, uses strategies to assist with processing difficulties, and exhibits an interest in her immediate and extended world.

The male student is anxious with others and appears depressed, demonstrates behaviors indicating very low self-esteem, fears making mistakes and displeasing others, is reluctant to interact with others, and is regressing academically.

At point three: The female student lives alone in her own apartment, has held a part-time job in the court system for three years, has an extensive natural support network, uses coping strategies to assist with processing difficulties, and uses literacy at work and in daily life.

The male student lives with his parents, has lost several jobs, works in a sheltered workshop for tokens, has only family members in his support system, has had difficulties in community settings, and uses functional literacy only when necessary.

At point four: The female student shares an apartment with her husband (the male student), has held her part time job in the court system for seven years (is a permanent employee with full benefits), has expanded her natural support network, has increased the number of community settings in which she participates, uses her literacy skills at work and in daily life, and is self-assured and confident across contexts.

The male student shares an apartment with his wife (the female student), has a part time job in the community (but still has some difficulty holding a job), has increased the number of community settings in which he participates (with wife), uses members of his wife's support network for his own support (sometimes with negative results), and uses advocates when in difficulty. However, he is still anxious with others and requires frequent reassurance (a problem when accessing his wife's support network).

It is easy to assume that the difference in school placement caused the resulting differences in life outcomes for these two individuals. While the authors support the validity of these conclusions with many examples, the researchers acknowledge that other variables exist that could have impacted the outcome. It is possible that the services provided at any point during the students' educational experiences in either setting were either exemplary or less than exemplary. Although differences in the services they were using as adults were evident, the same adult services were available for both. The ongoing involvement of a knowledgeable parent advocate for the female student ensured that special education-related and adult services provided for her reflected her individual needs and preferences and assisted her in acquiring and maintaining a high quality of life. The female student had many opportunities to access and participates in activities that fostered the development of self-advocacy and self-determination simply because she had access to an environment where her peers who were developing and using self-advocacy and self-determination were available as role models..

Although this study had only two participants, it does suggest that the current trend to provide services for students with severe disabilities in inclusive general education contexts may be a factor that facilitates more positive adult outcomes.

Looking at studies of high school inclusion as a whole one is struck by the more variable outcomes of inclusion that they portray in contrast of the elementary school studies. Their value is limited by the inability, in many cases, to disaggregate the high school data.

In Ryndak, Ward, and Alper (2010b) the subjects were two brothers, one educated in a self-contained setting and the other an inclusive setting. There was a ten-year age difference between the two brothers. The older brother had mild to moderate cognitive disabilities; the younger had multiple disabilities, including moderate cognitive disabilities. Both resided in a one-building rural school district. The research method was qualitative, employing school records, interviews, and observation. It addressed the question: Do persons with significant disabilities lead more satisfying post-school lives when they are educated in segregated or inclusive settings? Their conclusions were that the brother who received inclusive services in general education demonstrated more skills that were critical in interacting with peers and adults without disabilities and in functioning independently in school, community and home. He acquired and used knowledge and skills effectively in meaningful and naturally occurring settings. As he became a young adult he developed and maintained a life that more closely approximated that of his non-disabled classmates even though his IQ was lower than that of his older brother who had been educated in self-contained settings.

Qualitative studies, such as those in which Ryndak (1999, 2010a, 2010b) was the principal investigator, are impressive testimonials to the apparent efficacy of high school inclusion, but are open to the criticism that they focused on small numbers of individuals who may have been (consciously or unconsciously) selected because of their potential for

positive results. Clearly it will require many more such individual or small-sample studies to document convincingly the social and academic benefits of high school inclusion for students with severe disabilities.

Carter (2005) does not see social inclusion in high school happening for individuals with severe disabilities unless means are employed to facilitate interactions between them and their nondisabled peers. Freeman's (2000) results, while generally positive regarding inclusion, do not separate elementary school subjects from high school subjects. That could be the source of the difference between his and Carter's less positive findings —more inclusion does not lead to more socialization in high school—and the many studies of elementary school inclusion which show more inclusion does lead to more interaction with nondisabled peers.

Parent Perspective

In this section I will cover the extensive research on the perceptions of parents regarding the inclusion of their child with severe disabilities in general education classes and activities. As the history outlined at the beginning of this chapter indicates, parents of children with disabilities have been key players in the school-inclusion movement, working assertively to secure integrated, non-discriminatory educational opportunities for their sons and daughters. In broad overview the literature on parents focuses on five topics: 1) perceived academic and social benefits for children with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms; 2) roles of the parents in advocating and facilitating such inclusion; 3) relationships of parents with school personnel; 4) benefits to students without disabilities from the inclusion of peers with disabilities in their classes

and extra-curricular activities; and 5) views of parents who do not desire inclusion in general education classes for their children with disabilities.

Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, and Williams (1996) conducted qualitative interviews of parents of 13 children, five to nineteen years old. Semistructured interview questions sought to discover the perceptions of parents regarding the location in which services were provided (i.e., special or general education classroom), the content addressed during instruction, and the manner in which services are delivered. Parents perceptions regarding the location in which services were provided included comments about the decision-making process used when a child is placed in special education, rationale for the placement of the child in a specific setting, and classroom and building environments. Areas of concern regarding content addressed during instruction included the instructional content taught in various settings, assessment procedures used to identify a student's strengths and needs, and procedures used to identify instructional content for a student's IEP. Parents expressed concern regarding *the manner in which services were provided* including supervision of students, instructional materials and context, and teaming efforts.

Parents had clear ideas about what constituted appropriateness versus inappropriateness regarding instructional content. They also held definite views on least-restrictive versus more-restrictive in relation to the location of services. Parents did not feel that they were valued members of their child's IEP team. They expressed unhappiness and frustration with the decision-making process. The parents expressed anger and amazement about their district's lack of understanding of their child's need for a natural support network and the need for opportunities to interact with same age non-

disabled peers. They valued opportunities to give input to the IEP team regarding appropriate instructional content for their child. Parents felt that when their input was accepted it resulted in a more appropriate IEP. They believed that the quality of the IEP, and the instructional content, was better when their child was included in general education classes. Parents felt that their child had to be treated like, and placed with, his/her peers without disabilities and that their child with disabilities should be able to experience the same meaningful and valued educational activities. They expressed concern that the presence of a one-on-one paraeducator replaced emphasis on learning how to function with same age non-disabled peers in natural environments. Parents emphasized the importance of using real materials, providing instruction with same age non-disabled peers, using the most motivating context for learning, and integrating related services with other instructional activity.

Parents in this study were drawn from membership in a pro-inclusion advocacy organization. All participants were parents of students with moderate to severe disabilities. All were two- parent Caucasian families. Parents did, however, represent a range of socioeconomic status, and seven different school districts in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

The children with severe disabilities numbered 13. At the time of the study, they ranged in age from five to twenty years and had experience in an inclusion setting for a minimum of one to five years. No participant was removed from the regular education setting for more than 90 minutes. All participants received either paraeducator support or direct teacher support during instruction.

Data analysis consisted of each interview being coded independently by two co-authors and then coded by a third co-author. The skill acquisition was divided into five categories: academic, communication, social skills and interactions, behaviors and attitudes, and motor skills. Parent responses and comments were supported by documentation. Documented support consisted of educational records, educational team meeting notes, and work samples.

The findings indicated that all parents felt their children were making greater academic gains in the inclusive setting. Most of the parents felt their children had improved communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, as a result of the inclusive setting. Also, 10 of the 13 pairs of parents reported that their children had developed friendships with peers without disabilities. These friendships had in turn created opportunities for more diverse and age-appropriate experiences, such as mall shopping and movie attendance. Social skills were also reported as improved in 4 of the 13 students. Parents reported that their child had less anxiety in social situations and negative behaviors either decreased or were eliminated. More age-appropriate behaviors were also reported as a result of inclusion. Motor skill improvement was not directly affected but was perceived as improved by the majority of parents.

The most important benefit of inclusion was judged by the parents to be the greater acceptance and increased sensitivity to students with disabilities within the general education population. Generally, parents thought that inclusion had greatly benefited their children and provided greater future possibilities in social interactions and employment.

This Ryndak et al. study has several limiting variables. First, the number of students in the study was small (i.e., 13); second, the parents were drawn from a group that advocated for inclusion and therefore had a positive bias for inclusion that would influence their perceptions; and third, the study was limited in that all the parents were Caucasian.

Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, Widaman, and Best (1998) explored the perceptions of parents of children with severe disabilities regarding inclusion. They determined that the parents' perceptions were related to the characteristics of the parent and the child and were influenced by the child's placement history. This study explored the multidimensional influences on the perceptions that produce support for, or resistance to, inclusion of children with moderate to severe disabilities.

This study used data from 460 surveys. Participants were parents of students with a diagnosis of moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. Students with severe disabilities whose special education eligibility conditions involved visual or hearing deficits; children with a serious emotional disturbance without cognitive disability were excluded.

Three independent variables were controlled: 1) child characteristics, 2) placement history, and 3) parent characteristic. The authors created an inclusion survey that incorporated two scales. The first scale was Cognitive Domain of the Client Development Evaluation Report: this scale provides an estimate of general cognitive functioning through the assessment of such skills as number awareness, verbal and nonverbal expressive communication, and money handling. The second scale used contained a subset of relevant items from the Maladaptive Behavior Survey: This scale assesses the presence and degree of behaviors of physical violence and/or the tendency

towards violence. Information regarding the characteristics of parents and the placement variable was gathered through a set of individual questionnaires designed for the study.

Five constructs were used for dependent variables associated with parent perception of: 1) the quality of education services their child receives in the general education classroom; 2) the mutual benefits to both their own child and to general education students in the class; 3) acceptance and treatment of their children in traditional mainstreaming and support for integrated programs; 4) full inclusion in general; and 5) full inclusion for their child.

The study found that children with higher cognitive functioning and fewer behavior problems were more likely to be considered by parents as candidates for inclusion. Also, parents who value socialization were more likely to view full inclusion favorably. Socialization values were a significant predictor of positive perceptions associated with all five constructs and were unrelated to their child's cognitive skills. Being Caucasian was also an indicator of positive perception toward full inclusion in general and full inclusion for their child. This trend was negated only when the child's inability to walk or severe behavioral problems were present.

Conversely, parents who placed a high value on specialized curriculum over social skills were less favorable about inclusion in general and for their own child. Negative perceptions of inclusion were more often seen when a child had spent more years in special education classes. Overall, parents of students with higher cognitive abilities were more in favor of inclusion than parents of students with more severe cognitive disability.

This study is limited to the number of surveys analyzed. These surveys were representative of parents who were willing to participate and do not include those solicited for participation but who did not respond. Those parents may reflect a different point-of-view.

Grove and Fisher (1999) reported on a qualitative study based on interviews of 20 parents of children with severe disabilities, ages six to seventeen years. The results showed that the process of parental presence in inclusive education extends beyond the initial placement decision to their ongoing involvement at the school site. At the schools parents actively participate in the work of inclusion while shaping the definition and reality of inclusive education for their children. This study was conducted in an effort to provide a starting point for understanding inclusion as a cultural product that parents are introduced to and wrestle with as they try to meet their children's educational goals.

Data for this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Interviews lasted about one hour and were taped. An interview guide was used that covered three main areas: information about the child and his or her disability, the decision to fully include the child in a regular education class, and the parents' assessment of the process. The interview questions were based on the hypothesis that the decision to opt for inclusive education takes place within a particular context and are influenced by parental beliefs and attitudes about inclusion and their child.

Study participants were drawn from 21 schools in a single county. Solicitation by flyer was used to gain participants and each participant received a $50 compensation for contributed time. Each interview was 24 pages in length and was usually conducted in the home. The children in question ranged in age from six to seventeen years with the

majority (80%) in elementary classes. Parents of students with a range of moderate to severe cognitive disabilities were represented.

Data were analyzed for themes. Each researcher independently categorized the data into broad areas and highlighted quotations and examples that supported each category. The themes which emerged during this process included parents' expertise in inclusive education and their position as unexpected advocates for, and definers of, inclusive education. The study revealed that it was most often parents who gathered information on inclusion, presented the information to the school, and helped to provide the in-service information for school staff and adjustments to school setting in order to facilitate their child's inclusion.

This study is limited by the fact that the participants were drawn from a single large urban area and may not be representative of other communities. Also, 20 is a rather small number of participants. The opinions of parents of elementary school children are not reported separate from the opinions of parents of high school students. One would like to see if the two categories, elementary versus high school, would produce different viewpoints.

Lake and Billingsley (2000) evaluated the factors involved in the conflict which can result regarding program placement for students with cognitive disabilities. They hoped that increased understanding of the events and attitudes leading to conflict could decrease such future conflict.

Data from 44 telephone interviews were analyzed in order to understand the factors that create or escalate conflicts revolving around school placement of students with disabilities. Parents interviewed were twenty-one mothers and one father. Sixteen

school officials and eight mediators were also interviewed. The ages of the students were from four to twenty years and 64% of the students were male. The school officials ranged from one year to fourteen years of experience, with 79% having been involved with conflict resolution training.

The results of the telephone surveys brought to light eight factors which were found to have increased or decreased conflict: 1) discrepant views of a child or the child's needs between parent and school officials; 2) lack of knowledge and problem-solving strategies for both parent and school officials; 3) service delivery; 4) constraints on resources of time, money, personnel, and materials) 5) parental feelings of devaluation for themselves and their children; 6) communication, particularly when communications had previously been limited; 7) trust, as when a feeling of trust toward school officials deescalated conflict or one of broken trust created conflict; and 8) reciprocal power, as when parents and school employees employed position-generated power or tactical maneuvers, either consciously or unconsciously, in attempts to get what they wanted.

This study was limited to a small volunteer population in one state. Replication of this study in other areas of the country may provide a basis for confirming or elaborating on the factors identified. Also, this study did not differentiate among parents of children with mild, moderate, or severe disabilities. Neither did it disaggregate the results for parents, administrators, and mediators. One might speculate that the results for each subgroup could be unique to that group and quite different from one another.

Duhaney and Salend (2000) reviewed 17 studies which revealed that the majority of parents of students with moderate to severe disabilities feel that inclusion is beneficial for their children. The parents claimed greater levels of self-esteem, fewer behavior

problems, more opportunities for friendships with non-disabled peers, and a greater tolerance of human limitations and differences in the general education community. The studies also revealed a commonality in that the majority of parents had similar concerns. These concerns were about the lack of individual attention in a general education setting and the availability of trained and qualified educators.

The studies chosen for review were based on the following criteria: the study included family members of children with or without disabilities; the study included data related to attitudes, reactions, experiences, or perceptions of family members to educational settings in which both disabled and non-disabled students were included; and the study was completed after 1985.

Two of the 17 studies questioned mothers of children with disabilities, and 15 surveyed parents of children with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities ranged in age from six weeks to thirty-five years. Surveys, interviews, and observations were used. An analysis of the surveys revealed that the parents felt that their children's experience in an inclusive educational program was positive and that they preferred having their children without disabilities in classes that included children with disabilities. The parents' rating indicated that their children without disabilities exhibited an improved feeling of self-worth from helping others, an increased sense of personal development and a greater tolerance of human differences. Ninety percent of the parents reported that the opportunity to be educated with a classmate with severe disabilities was a positive experience for their children's social/emotional growth and did not interfere with their children obtaining a good education.

The studies reviewed by Duhaney and Salend (2000) reveal that parents of children without disabilities have varied, but generally positive, perspectives toward inclusion. The parents of children with disabilities did however have some concerns regarding inclusion. The parents' concerns are related to the availability of qualified personnel and individualized and specialized services, especially for their children with severe disabilities who moved from integrated to inclusion programs

The review is limited in that the information was obtained solely from the use of interviews and surveys. Other information needed to verify and support these data (i.e., direct observation of changes in the children and written documents) was not provided. The studies also failed to provide random selection of subjects and the low return rate associated with the survey research may have resulted in a biased sample. Finally, the majority of the studies cited had small sample size which makes it difficult to generalize the findings to a larger population of parents and children.

Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 140 parents of students with severe disabilities, ages three to twenty-three. Interview questions focused on why the parents are supportive of, or resistant to, inclusive education. Reasons parents supported inclusion included beliefs that the child would learn more in a general education classroom. Parents who opposed inclusion largely indicated that the severity of their child's disabilities precluded any benefit from such a program or that the general education program would not be educationally appropriate or welcoming to their children. In general, parents with children exhibiting greater disabilities were more likely to have a negative view of inclusion in regular education classes.

The Palmer study was limited in that the sampling lacked randomization. The findings cannot be applied to the general population of students with severe disabilities. The age range, three to twenty-three, is also a limiting factor for the study. For example: the concerns of the parents of a three-year-old would be very different from the concerns of parents of a twenty-year-old.

In summary: In this subsection, Parents' Perspective, we have found that parents of children with severe disabilities agree that their children will make greater academic gains in general education classrooms. Parents also believe that their children will also improve their social skills and communication skills if they are included in general education. An additional benefit of inclusion from the perspective of parents is the possibility of friendships with nondisabled peers. Those parents whose child has relatively higher cognitive abilities and no behavioral problems see inclusion as very desirable. Parents who value socialization for their child with severe disabilities as an important goal see inclusion as the means of obtaining that goal. Parents see themselves as having an important role in the inclusion of their child, providing information on how to include their child to the school. This belief of the parents, that they have expertise, can cause conflict between them and the school. Even those parents who believe that inclusion in general education classes is beneficial for their children with severe disabilities have concerns. They wonder if their child will receive the individual attention he or she needs and whether qualified personnel will be available to implement the child's learning program. The parents of children without disabilities have responded positively to including children with severe disabilities in general education classes. Those parents have described the benefits for their children as increased self-worth as a

result of helping someone else, an increase in personal development in their child, and an increased tolerance for differences in people as observed and reported by the parent.

Teacher Perceptions

Successful inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms can succeed only to the degree that classroom teachers buy into the concept of inclusion and are supported by school administrators—of whom more will be said in the final section of this literature review. Because the number is not large, this literature review looked at all available studies on general education teacher and special education teacher perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in general education classes. Are these perceptions and attitudes positive or negative? What factors cause such perceptions and attitudes to change? Is inclusion always desirable? Should inclusion's primary goal be academic knowledge or socialization? What are inclusion's effects on students without disabilities in the same classes and activities? What supports are needed if inclusion in the general education classroom is to be successful?

.Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) analyzed 28 reports in which they applied systematic research synthesis procedures to questionnaires given to teachers. These questionnaires asked teachers about their perceptions regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Also evaluated were the potential impact on teacher attitudes of the variables of geographical region, year of the survey, and teacher characteristics. The 28 reports ranged in date from 1958 to 1995. These reports provided original data of relevance to teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming. Respondents included 10,560 teachers and other school personnel from rural, urban, suburban, or

combined school districts in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and Western parts of the United States; New South Wales, Australia, and Montreal, Canada.

Across all surveys, items addressing common topics of relevance were identified for each item or cluster of items. A figure of percent of respondents in agreement was identified or derived from the data presented in each report. Figures given for proportion or percentage of respondents in agreement with specific item types reflect both actual percentages and estimated percentages. The results were reported as the higher the percentage, the greater the agreement for mainstreaming. Overall, 4,801 of 7,385 teachers surveyed (65%), indicated support of the concept of mainstreaming and inclusion. Percentages were not changed significantly by geographic location, date of study, or the number of years in teaching.

One limitation of this research is that it reflects self-reported perceptions rather than actual observable classroom events. A serious drawback in the results from this research is that it reflects elementary and secondary disagreement on certain survey questions, but this disagreement is not addressed in the outcome summary.

Researchers Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) assessed the perceptions of 680 general and special educators and administrators related to the full inclusion of all students, including students with moderate and severe disabilities. These teachers and administrators all had some experience educating all students, regardless of the nature or type of disability, in age-appropriate general education classrooms in the student's neighborhood school.

The researchers examined the relationship between teacher role, general or special educator, and their attitude toward inclusion; the relationship between the background

and experience of *general education* teachers and administrators and their attitudes toward inclusion; and the relationship between background and experience of *special education* teachers and administrators and their attitudes toward inclusion.

At each of 32 schools the entire staff of that school was surveyed using a true-false format for a total of 690 respondents. The survey instrument asked questions which addressed two factors, the impact of heterogeneous education on students (ten items) and the facilitation of systems change by heterogeneous education (six items). A statistical analysis using ANOVA was applied to the results.

The analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences in perceptions between general education staff and special education staff. However, the within-group variability was minimal. The results also showed that the general and special educators surveyed typically believed that educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms results in positive changes in educators' attitudes toward inclusion. These results contradict conclusions of previous attitudinal research that found that general and special educators favored the predominant pullout model of special education service delivery (e.g., Coates, 1989; Semmel et al., 1991). Other findings include: an initial negative attitude toward inclusion can and does change after actual experience including students with disabilities; experience including students with disabilities provides an opportunity to develop the new skills necessary to implement inclusion and a more positive attitude is the result.

General education personnel identified administrative support, time to collaborate, and experience with students with severe and profound disabilities as factors associated with their attitudes regarding the education of students with disabilities in general

education classrooms. For special education personnel, the degree of collaboration practiced by participants emerged as a powerful predictor of attitudes, as did administrative support.

While this study was exceptionally well thought out and carefully analyzed, its limitation is the limitation of any survey that elicits true-false responses: contextual information is not available. And, in fact, the researchers suggest that follow-up qualitative studies should be the next line of research.

Taylor, Richards, Goldstein, and Schilit (1997) conducted a quantitative research study using a survey of 96 university students. The students were from four different groups: general education graduate students (who were experienced teachers), special education graduate students (also experienced teachers), general education undergraduates, and special education undergraduates.

The students were asked to complete a 14-item Likert-type scale, rating their level of agreement or disagreement to 14 statements regarding the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The first 11 items were based on the agreement or disagreement with the statements made in the REI. The last three items focused on the level of acceptability to the respondents of including students with different types of disabilities in the general education classroom.

ANOVA was used for analysis of the four groups' responses for differences between the groups. Percentages were used to compare each individual within each group. Results of the survey found that there was a consistent agreement and disagreement among the four groups with the statements that focused on the

philosophical assumptions of the REI. However, there were differences on statements that dealt with the actual implementation of the REI.

Both general and special educators agreed in principle with the philosophical assumptions of the REI. But both groups also agreed that curriculum changes were necessary. The survey showed considerable disagreement between "experienced teachers" and undergraduates in teacher training. The experienced teachers were more skeptical of implementation of the changes associated with the REI. Significant differences existed between general and special educators when it came to their opinions about the actual placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The majority of general educators specifically disagreed with the placement of students with cognitive disabilities and/or behavioral or emotional disabilities in the general education classroom. A major limitation of this study is the lack of information on the respondent group. Although the group is from a university, that does not necessarily mean that the respondent group is diverse.

Olson, Chalmers, and Hoover's 1997 study explored how the successful inclusion of students with disabilities is related to the attitudes of the general education teacher. The participants, ten general education teachers from both elementary and secondary schools in a rural area of a metropolitan district, were nominated by their principals and the special education teachers as general educators who were successful establishing an inclusive classroom. Teachers who were chosen by both the special education teacher and the principal were asked to participate in the study. Five of the ten participants taught elementary school and five taught secondary school. Nine of the ten were female with an average of 12.6 years of teaching experience.

These individuals were then interviewed. Each interview took about one hour. A set of 12 open-ended questions were asked each participant. The initial interviews were transcribed and analyzed for developing themes. The themes that resulted were given to the participants with a follow-up questionnaire. Participants were asked to validate and endorse themes as representative or not representative of the original questionnaire. All participants responded.

Seven themes emerged from the interviews and all seven themes were given 100% agreement by all participants. General education teachers who were successful at including students with disabilities in their classrooms exhibited the following characteristics: possessed tolerant, reflective, flexible personalities; accepted responsibility for all students; maintained a positive relationship with the special education teacher; adjusted expectations; demonstrated interpersonal warmth and acceptance; felt that insufficient time was available for collaboration; and believed that inclusion was not always appropriate for all students. The limitation of this study is the small participant sample (N=10) and the lack of diversity (rural only) in the demographic areas.

In 1998 Goessling published a qualitative study that interviewed 14 special education teachers from 14 different public schools in Massachusetts, kindergarten through eighth grade, about their changing roles and responsibilities as they moved into inclusive settings with students with severe disabilities and thereby became *inclusion facilitators.*

Teachers selected to be interviewed needed to be full-time certified special education teachers employed by a school district; their students with severe disabilities

were in the general education classroom at least 50% of the school day; and they functioned as supervisors of paraeducators in general education classrooms. Fourteen participants were chosen. They had an average of 12 years special education experience and had taught in self-contained classrooms. The number of years as a facilitator ranged from one to six; and each one had responsibility for supervising from one to fifteen paraeducators.

Interviews were used for data collection. The interviews were open-ended, and organized and presented in a sequential manner. Individual interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, and sessions were audio taped. Data were analyzed and interpreted consistent with qualitative methodology using systematic coding and analysis.

The 14 participants indicated that the facilitators did not want to return to a self-contained classroom, and all facilitators believed that their role would make schools and society more inclusive. In addition, facilitators believed that students with severe disabilities would learn more in an integrated environment. The majority of teachers indicated that they and their students were thriving in the mainstream.

The limitations of the study include the absence of observations to corroborate the perceptions of the special education teacher/inclusion facilitator or any data to show that the students with severe disabilities were "thriving."

In Wood's 1998 qualitative research study the goals and focus of the inquiry were, first, to document teachers' feelings of obligation, responsibility, and commitment to specific educational goals for children with severe disabilities included in general education classrooms; and, second, to describe the barriers and facilitators of collaboration between the professionals as perceived by the team members.

The research sites used were inclusive classrooms in elementary school programs available for children with severe disabilities within a California school district. This school district served about 5,500 students within 11 elementary schools, grades K through 6. The student body is of Caucasian and Latino descent. Twenty-nine percent of the population is at or below the federal poverty line. At the time of this study the schools were in their first year of inclusion of children with severe disabilities.

Teacher participants were a sample of general and special education teachers comprising the collaborative teaching teams of children with severe disabilities. Student participants were selected who displayed the following characteristics: were in the early to mid-elementary grade level; had moderate to severe disabilities with a number of self-care as well as academic needs; were included in the general education environment for a substantial proportion of the day; and were not experiencing any significant transitional service delivery complications.

Semi-structured interviews were used to seek information about teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration, communication, and team building. The-interviews were about one hour long, audi- taped, and were designed to allow the participants to talk about their individual experiences, their developing education team, and their opinions regarding the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in general education classrooms.

The first two interviews with each teacher-participant were conducted at the beginning of the school year, within the first two months of the fall semester, and were scheduled about two weeks apart. The third interview was done four months later. The

data gathered included only the personal experiences and opinions of the education team members. No classroom observations were conducted.

The following conclusions were made from triangulation of the interview data: The results demonstrate similar findings among the groups concerning patterns of role perceptions, collaboration, and team decision-making in the initial phases of inclusion. Teachers and parents maintained discrete role boundaries through a relatively clear division of labor. As the school year progressed, role perceptions became less rigid as the teaming became more cooperative. The groups' eventual ability to diminish role distinctions and form more cooperative alliances at the end of the school year has important implications to the success of their inclusion programs and local training efforts.

The study is limited in that there were only three student participants and six teachers. The study results cannot therefore be generalized to fit other contexts. To say that this study was triangulated seems inaccurate since no observations were done and no evidence for document analysis was offered. Although the adults saw these inclusive situations as successful, the study did not include the outcomes for the students involved in the inclusive classrooms.

Sebastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998) conducted a qualitative study in a school district located in a rural area of Utah. The district had a total enrollment of 16,650 students. Eight students with severe disabilities were included in two rural schools, one middle school and one high school. Students varied in their ability to communicate from one student who was non-verbal to another who used three- and four-word utterances.

All students spent part of the school day in content-area classes and the remainder of the time in self-contained classrooms or in a community-based setting.

Individuals were selected because of their involvement with students with severe disabilities, either in the classroom or within the school program at large. A total of ten educators from each school were identified to participate in the study. Six content-area teachers in each school were selected; three of the teachers had students with severe disabilities in their content classes, and the other three teachers would be including such students later in the school year. The building principal, a school counselor, and two special education teachers were also identified from each school to participate in the interviews.

Structured interviews were conducted with study participants over one school year. An interview protocol was developed using these four basic question areas: participants' attitudes; perceptions of the impact on student with disabilities; effects on participants' teaching practice; and needed supports. Interviews were taped recorded and transcribed later for analysis.

The research team developed a system for coding the responses in each question area. The team worked together on one transcribed interview in order to clarify the analysis codes and insure that the definitions were clear. Each team member read all the transcripts for each school and compared their coding of the participants' responses. Examples of the participants' responses were selected to illustrate themes and patterns in the data. Using cross-case and within-case comparison strategies, a thematic framework emerged.

Generally, participants' beliefs and attitudes about inclusion changed very little from the initial interview conducted in the fall of the school year. Changes in perception and experiences from fall to spring are noted in each of the theme categories. The spring interviews contained many stories about included students and examples of instructional strategies.

Participants' initial beliefs that including students with severe disabilities was the right thing to do were validated by actual experience with the students. Balancing individual attention and group focus remained a challenge. Participants felt they needed special education support to help with students in the classroom.

Participants reported that students without disabilities grew in their overall acceptance and tolerance of students with disabilities. Co-teaching, effective use of peer tutors, and sensitivity to each student's unique growth were some of the successful strategies implemented by the teachers.

Participants identified both internal and external kinds of support needed. Technical assistance specific to each student's needs and collaboration among educators were examples of internal support. Funding from the district was viewed as critical to overall success of inclusion (e.g., purchase additional help and equipment).

This study was limited in that it examined the reported perceptions and experiences of educators who included students with severe disabilities in their classrooms. However, corroborating data, such as classroom observations and specific student data were not collected as part of this research. The findings from this study are limited to the one school district in a specific region of the country.

Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski and Costanza (1999) designed a qualitative study to assess the perceptions of general and special education teachers from three schools over an entire school year as the teachers sought to include students with severe disabilities in rural neighborhood schools with naturally occurring local resources. The general education teachers in the study did not have training in special education.

Three rural schools served as settings for this study. School A was an elementary school, School B was a middle school and school C was an elementary school. Schools B and C were in the same school district. Prior to inclusion all three students in the study were in self-contained special education classrooms for the majority of academic instruction; only 15% of their time was spent in the general education classroom. Pre-transfer activities and observations were conducted in the spring before the actual inclusion of the fall.

The interview instrument was developed for use in a structured, face-to-face interview lasting less than one hour. The interview covered six major topic areas: 1) planning, 2) expectations, 3) positive experiences, 4) adaptations, 5) challenges and barriers, and 6) supports and resources. The questions were based on issues considered important in the literature on neighborhood schools and inclusion, were open-ended, and were of three types: experience or behavior questions, opinions and value questions, and feeling questions. Interviews were conducted at three times: beginning of the year, mid-year, and end of the year. Analysis of the data included coding and identifying themes. The data analysis showed 56 themes. Of the 56 themes identified, 13 were considered

persistent because they appeared across at least three of the six teachers and across all three rounds of interviews.

The 13 themes related to planning, expectations, positive experiences, adaptations, challenges and barriers, and supports and resources. Themes related to *planning* included the need for time together with other staff and the need for specific advance preparation in order to better transition students into the general education classroom. Themes related to *expectations* included the teachers' surprise at the student's progress in at least one area of performance and the subsequent increased expectations for their student with severe disabilities. Themes related to *positive experiences* included positive social interactions, acceptance, and support of the student with severe disabilities by their non-disabled peers and positive reactions of the student with severe disabilities to social and academic opportunities. In addition, the general education teachers felt rewarded by the progress and acceptance of the students with severe disabilities. Themes related to *adaptations* included the need for additional adaptations in order to more effectively include the students with severe disabilities. Although many specific adaptations were made for the students with severe disabilities, the teachers stated that it could be both frustrating and challenging to develop those adaptations. Themes related to *challenges and barriers* included the attitudes of some general education staff, difficulties finding appropriate general education classes/activities for including the student with severe disabilities, the limited communication skills of two of the students with severe disabilities, and the physical structures that needed adaptations for one of the students (i.e., she used a wheel chair). Themes related to supports/resources included the need for an opportunity to consult with an outside resource person with specific expertise in the

area of severe disabilities and the need for more information and training for the special and general education teachers about students with severe disabilities and their inclusion in general education.

The most successful inclusion was found in school A. Elements critical to successful inclusion present in school A that were absent or minimal in schools B and C were administrative support, preparation and training for staff, communication and collaboration among staff, ongoing direct service from a knowledgeable consultant, and the use of non-disabled peers for support. Also, the student in school A was able to do some academic work and was for the most part a very pleasant and easygoing young woman. As with all social interactions, the reinforcement of interaction (smiles) can affect the outcomes. The students in schools B and C exhibited less academic competency within the grade-level instruction and the student in school C exhibited behavior problems. The primary limitation of this study is the small sampling, six teachers, from three schools. Also limiting are the location--a single geographic area--and the one-year time period.

Agran, Alper, and Wehmeyer (2002) conducted a survey to obtain teachers' opinions relating to access to the general curriculum for students with severe disabilities. Two hundred special education teachers' names and addresses were selected at random to participate in the study. Eighty-four participants responded to the survey.

A 22-item questionnaire was developed. Six questions pertained to demographic information. The remaining 16 questions varied in response mode and included Likert-scaled items and multiple-choice questions. These 16 questions pertained to the type and degree of access students with disabilities had to the general education curriculum;

supports that were in place; grouping arrangements that were in place; the social involvement of students with and without disabilities; accountability of student progress; student skill areas to facilitate access; and barriers that restrict access to the general curriculum.

Frequencies of number of respondents who checked each item of each question were tallied and then converted to percentages for the six demographic and fourteen multiple-choice items. The two Likert-scaled questions were ranked for degree of importance. These pertained to students' skills believed important for facilitating access to the general curriculum and potential barriers to access. Numerical rankings for each response was totaled, and then divided by the total number of respondents. This gave a mean ranking of importance to each choice.

Eighty-one percent of teachers indicated their students are included in general education classes for all or part of each school day, and seventy-three percent reported including their students with disabilities participated in small and large group activities alongside students without disabilities. Teachers were asked to rank the relative importance of nine skill areas for facilitating access for their students to the general education curriculum. Appropriate social skills were ranked the highest; communication skills were ranked second; and decision making ranked third. Ranked lowest were academic skills, daily living, and transition from school to work. Thirty-five percent of teachers reported that they actively participated in general education curriculum planning for their students. Ninety-five percent reported that an alternate assessment of students with severe disabilities was very important and eighty-five percent of teachers reported that students with disabilities should not be held to benchmarks for the students without

disabilities. Fifty-three percent reported that their school district had no clear plan for ensuring access to the general education curriculum for students with severe disabilities.

There were several limitations to this study. First, the participant number was less than 100. Second, the participants were all from the same geographic location. And, third, the opinions expressed are those of the special educators who responded. Those who did not respond may have may have different responses for each question. But the biggest difficulty with the results of this study is that it is unclear where the respondents were teaching—preschool, elementary school, or high school.

Carter and Hughes (2006) reviewed the mandate for inclusion and explored the numbers of students with severe disabilities included in general education classrooms in high school. They found that compared to the elementary grades, students with severe disabilities spend substantially more time outside the general education classroom in high school. Their research sought to uncover the reason for the apparent disconnect between recommended and actual educational practices in the area of including students with severe disabilities in general education in high school. Previous research has shown that implementation of educational practices relies heavily on the school staff's acceptance of those practices. Such research has also identified significant differences in the perceptions of secondary school staff relative to elementary school staff in such areas as curricular focus, classroom expectations, and instructional priorities. The purpose of the Carter and Hughes study was to examine the perceptions of high school staff regarding the goals, barriers, benefits, outcomes, and supports associated with including students with severe disabilities in high school general education classrooms.

The participants in this study were the school staff of 11 urban high schools. General education teachers, special education teachers, paraeducators, and school administrators employed in all the eleven high schools participated (n=100). Student enrollment at each high school ranged from 896 to 2250 students. Two hundred and eleven students with severe disabilities, ages 15-19, were enrolled across all 11 high schools. None of these high schools followed a full inclusion service delivery model (i.e., the student with disabilities enrolled full-time in age-appropriate general education classes). A mainstreaming model was in place—some attendance in general education classes for some of the students, while their primary membership remained in resource room or self-contained classes.

Thirty-six general education teachers, 29 special education teachers, 19 paraeducators and 16 administrators were given a five-part questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire contained items addressing the following: a) participant demographics; b) general education classroom instructional priorities; c) barriers to including students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms; d) risks associated with inclusion; e) training and supports received/needed; and f) benefits of including students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. Responses were provided on a five-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from *not at all important* (1) to *very important* (5). A series of ANOVAs were used to identify significant differences between groups.

Overall, instructional areas were rated as more important for general education students than for the students with severe disabilities. The results showed that while "interacting socially with classmates" was rated very important for students with

disabilities by all groups, items such as “learning course content” or “developing critical thinking skills” were only rated as important for general education students. Only administrators rated all instructional areas as important for students with disabilities.

Across groups, the most substantial barrier reported was “lack of personnel to support students [with disabilities] in general education classrooms.” The item rated as the most substantial barrier by general education teachers was “limited time to collaborate with special education teachers”; by special education teachers, “attitudes of teachers/staff”; by paraeducators, “general education teachers’ lack of knowledge about the students’ IEP goals”; and by administrators as, “limited time to collaborate with special education teachers.” Across groups, the item rated as being the greatest risk was “students with disabilities may disrupt class” and the item rated as being the least risk was “general education students may be held back academically.” Across groups, the most substantial benefit for students with severe disabilities was judged to be “opportunities to interact socially with classmates”; for general education classmates, “improving attitudes toward students with disabilities.” Across groups, the most frequently reported training/supports received were pre-service training and in-service workshops and conferences; least frequently received were “adapted/appropriate curricular materials” and “additional resources and personnel.” Unfortunately, the least frequently received supports were also the items reported as the most needed.

The broadly shared and highly positive perception of benefits derived from inclusion stated across all the groups was not reflected in the small numbers of students with severe disabilities actually included in general education. While the perception was positive, it did not translate into inclusion. Moderate to substantial barriers were

identified by all groups. It may be that the perception of barriers outweighs the positive response to inclusion. "We like the idea, but it can't be done". These barriers are similar to those identified by teachers more than ten years ago (e.g., Downing et al., 1997). Special education teachers and paraeducators saw the barriers as more substantial than did the general educators. These perceptions of barriers are of particular concern because the special educator has a primary responsibility in placement decisions. Collaborative teaming could bring these divergent views more into alignment.

General education teachers placed more importance on social and functional skill outcomes for students with severe disabilities than they did on academic outcomes. This is consistent with research by Agran and Alper (2000). This finding raises questions about the extent to which students with severe disabilities are actually accessing the content of the general education curriculum. Recent qualitative studies have shown that positive academic outcomes achieved in the general education classroom are possible for students with severe disabilities (e.g., Ryndak, Morrison, & Sommerstein, 1999; Ryndak, Ward, et al., 2010). Planning and support teams need to clarify the instructional expectations for all students in general education classrooms and ensure that all the staff responsible for a student's education agree on the sought after outcomes.

The supports that the participants reported receiving were not the supports that they reported needing. Participants sought professional development that would directly impact classroom practices. Activities like sequenced workshops, onsite consultation, strategic mentoring, summer institutes, and provision of follow-up support after in-services might better meet their needs.

This research demonstrated that, while positive perceptions of inclusion existed among all the participants, barriers to inclusion and questions of academic student outcomes were also present. Collaborative teaming and providing needed supports could move the participants from positive perceptions to positive academic outcomes for students with severe disabilities.

Unfortunately for my purposes, studies that examine teacher perceptions about inclusion of students with severe disabilities do not always distinguish between general education teachers and special education teachers or between elementary and secondary teachers. Still, some broad conclusions can be reached from a review of these studies. When general education and special education teachers are questioned as a conglomerate the majority of the teachers support the concepts of mainstreaming and inclusion. It appears that, as the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities progresses, the process of inclusion becomes easier for everyone involved. While more experience with inclusion leads to a more positive attitude toward inclusion, teachers continue to think that inclusion is not always appropriate. Special education teachers who function as inclusion facilitators have a strongly positive view of inclusion for students with severe disabilities. At the same time general and special educators see social skills and communication skills as important goals of inclusion, but do not perceive academic goals as important. General education teachers acknowledge that inclusion is also of benefit to their students without disabilities, because it makes them more accepting and understanding of individuals with differences. All teachers express the need for support if they are to include students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. Some needs mentioned are: collaboration with a special educator, administrative

reinforcement, preparation and additional training, appropriate curricular materials, and the enlistment of nondisabled peers to work with students with disabilities.

Paraeducator perspective

In this section the literature discusses the role of the paraeducator from the viewpoint of the paraeducators themselves, the teachers they assist, and the students they support. The perspectives of the paraeducators on their role in inclusion are particularly well documented; those of the classroom teachers regarding paraeducators less so. One noteworthy study incorporates information from students with disabilities themselves. The important roles played by the paraeducator are well emphasized (e.g., behavior management, curricular adaptation), but there are signs that the paraeducator's role in the classroom may have negative effects as well. There are some indications that the close proximity of the paraeducator may decrease opportunities for socialization. This ambivalent situation has been well documented in the literature.

After the federal court (Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon, 1993) determined that a full or part-time paraeducator hired to work one-on-one with a student with severe disabilities was a legitimate support under the supplementary supports and services provision of IDEA, the use of a paraeducator to assist in the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities has become more common. Some educators have voiced concerns: Paraeducators are sometimes required to modify curriculum and provide instruction even though they do not have the training of a special educator. Both parents and teachers have expressed concerns that the presence of the paraeducator at the student's side will diminish the opportunities for the student with severe disabilities to interact with his/her non-disabled peers, although this social interaction is the very reason

that the student is being included in the general education environment. In the literature paraeducators have echoed these concerns.

Marks, Schrader, and Levine (1999) had surveyed the experiences and perspectives of 20 K through 8 paraeducators working in inclusive settings in California. This study was somewhat atypical of the national situation in that the three researchers worked for a private agency that supplied the paraeducators to the schools on a contract basis. The paraeducators themselves were atypical in that their level of educational achievement certainly exceeded the national norm: 18 of the 20 held either a bachelor's or a master's degree, though not necessarily in education. The paraeducators surveyed saw their jobs as having four components: first, insuring that the students with whom they worked did not disrupt the classes in which they were included; second, meeting the students immediate academic needs; third, serving as the resource person who was most familiar with the students with whom they worked and their educational and personal needs; and fourth, serving as an advocate for inclusion. As in the Riggs (2001) study, the paraeducators expressed a need for more training to cope with the job situations in which they found themselves, and the need to be more closely involved as a member of a team working with the included students.

Paraeducators' perceptions of their roles in inclusive classrooms were also studied by Downing, Ryndak, and Clark (2000). They interviewed 16 paraeducators who had experience in working with elementary and/or high school students. The interviewed paraeducators were nominated for study by special educators, which could have injected a potential bias in the study. It seems unlikely that the special educator would nominate someone for the study who was perceived as a critic or a "troublemaker."

The interviewed paraeducators saw their roles as: providing behavioral support (i.e., limiting the potential disruptive effect of the included student on the class); monitoring students to insure that they remained on task (this responsibility often extended to non-disabled students in the class); direct teaching of the included students; adapting and modifying curricula, materials, and activities to make them more appropriate for the included students; assisting with personal care (e.g., in the restroom or the lunchroom); facilitating the included student's interactions with non-disabled peers; completing a variety of clerical tasks for the classroom teacher; collaborating with other members of the student's IEP team; and, sometimes being the team member with whom the parents preferred to communicate.

Paraeducators perceived themselves as having a high degree of responsibility. Adequate and ongoing training is essential to meet this level of responsibility, but all too often this training is neither expected nor provided. Qualities that paraeducators saw as essential to their jobs included: loving being around children; wanting what is best for children; understanding how to interact with children in a productive manner; being firm; having good communication skills with children and adults; being flexible, patient and calm; not becoming defensive.

Riggs (2001) combined qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a descriptive and analytical survey of the work and the status of paraeducators in inclusive elementary school settings in two New England states. The qualitative dimension of the study was provided by guided interviews with 23 paraeducators; the quantitative through 758 survey responses (a 43% return) also from paraeducators. Riggs discovered paraeducators to be almost exclusively women, with the majority over 35 years of age

and at least five years of service in their jobs. Most of Riggs's informants exceeded the educational requirements for the positions that they held. All respondents said that they spent the majority of their working hours providing direct instructional services to students. All of the paraeducators surveyed reported that they felt they had not received (and were not receiving) enough training in the responsibilities of their jobs. They were simply put on the job and left to survive as best they could with support and counseling from peers. Almost half of the respondents lacked any formal job descriptions; when such job descriptions did exist, they were often out of date. The identity of supervisors and procedures for evaluation were often ambiguous. The most positive aspect of their jobs—and the primary reason why paraeducators chose to remain in their jobs—was the strongly positive work relationships they developed with teachers, administrators, other paraeducators, and the students..

Giangreco, Broer, and Edelman (2001a) discovered two models of teacher engagement with included students. Either the classroom teacher actively embraced the presence of the included student(s) and saw the teacher's role as one of teaching all students in the class—or, the teacher directed energy and attention to the non-disabled students in the class and left the paraeducator to be the primary teacher-tutor-caregiver for the included student. This may be too dichotomous a model; it is more likely that teacher behavior is spread along a continuum.

However, when the teacher does not see him- or herself as the teacher of all the students in the class, there are serious and possibly negative implications for the paraeducator assigned to the included student, and for the student. The paraeducator becomes the included student's primary teacher, with the student engaging in a different

set of lessons and activities from the non-disabled students. This results unavoidably in a sense of both psychological and physical isolation and shunning for the included student and for the paraeducator. The paraeducator tends to operate independently and may become difficult for the special educator and the teacher to supervise. Isolation from the class and a too-close student-paraeducator relationship is stigmatizing for the included student and defeats the purpose of inclusion. Based on these findings the authors recommend that the classroom teacher with included students *must* become the teacher for the entire class and the schools *must* take appropriate steps to insure that this happens.

What things make paraeducators feel respected and appreciated by the schools in which they work? What external factors enhance their sense of themselves?

Giangreco, Edelman, and Broer (2001b) interviewed 103 individuals—classroom teachers, paraeducators, special educators, and administrators. The study was conducted in the Vermont schools frequently used by the authors for other research and writing. The authors found six important factors that make paraeducators feel respected and appreciated: first, non-monetary signals of value (e.g., the simple "Thank you for …," the appreciation brunch, the small gift, the public acknowledgement); second, being entrusted with important responsibilities; third, compensation (American society uses compensation as a measure of an individual's worth, therefore compensation of paraeducators should reflect the high level of responsibility they perceive themselves as carrying); fourth, minimization of the clerical (i.e., perceived as menial) aspects of their jobs; fifth, having their views and opinions listened to and taken seriously; and sixth, being given adequate preparation for the job and opportunities for additional training and education while employed.

The authors emphasize the importance of the schools providing both symbolic and tangible rewards to promote paraeducators' sense of self-worth. One type of reward without the other does not produce the best results.

Broer, Doyle, and Giangreco (2005) asked 16 young Vermont adults with cognitive disabilities about their experiences of working with paraeducators during their high-school years. The answers were disturbing. The paraeducator was perceived as an in-class mother, which set the student apart from class peers who were not, of course, accompanied to school by a mother figure. The paraeducator tended to become the student's primary friend, which limited the opportunities to develop peer friendships with typical classmates. Perhaps the most disturbing and, to the authors unexpected, finding was the extent to which the included students had been bullied verbally or physically by their peers without disabilities. Such bullying included name-calling, theft of personal property, being pushed, hit or becoming the target of thrown objects, and—in two reported situations—being forced into lockers or trashcans. One role of the paraeducator is to protect the included student from such bullying; however, they were unable to be of help in these instances. Finally, the paraeducator usually becomes the included student's primary teacher/tutor even though the paraeducator is not a trained special education teacher. While this degree of personal attention can be helpful to the student, it also tends to separate the student from the classroom teacher, who perceives that she is not needed by the student with disabilities and may even feel that she is intruding.

The study is limited by the small sample size (N=16), however, the importance of hearing the students with cognitive disabilities affirm the same concerns voiced by others

cannot be ignored. Certainly, the significant issue of the bullying of students with cognitive disabilities needs further investigation.

One of the limitations of reliance on paraeducators individually assigned to students with severe disabilities is a tendency to isolate these students within the general education classroom. In an experiment that sought to alleviate this problem Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005) employed a curriculum, "Supporting Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools," to raise the awareness and improve the performance of four special education teachers in two Midwestern elementary schools. Four students with severe disabilities were paired with the four paraeducators. The pairs were observed before and after the training. Rigorously controlled methods were used to test the observed outcomes, which were: 1) "Rates of paraprofessional facilitative behavior increased following the intervention," but, more decisively, 2) "Rates of student interaction [between disabled and non-disabled peers] increased immediately and dramatically" and were maintained throughout the period of observation.

Giangreco, Smith, and Pinckney (2006) and Giangreco and Broer (2007) cite a growing number of studies which challenge the conventional wisdom regarding the roles of paraeducators in inclusive education. This literature suggests that paraeducators are making educational decisions on their own that should more appropriately belong to highly qualified general educators and to special educators; that the assignment of paraeducators to individual students with disabilities has negative effects on the students, including social isolation and stigmatization; and that the model of individually assigned paraeducators is not financially sustainable. A 16-point screening tool, developed by the authors, can assist "cross-stakeholder school teams in determining the extent to which

they may be over-reliant on special education paraeducators or [are] using them inappropriately" (Giangreco & Broer, 2007). The screening tool is presented in its entirety (it is freely available on the Internet) and the results of its testing at 27 sites across the country are analyzed. The field testing revealed a high level of concern at all but one of the 27 sites regarding the overuse or inappropriate use of paraeducators. The closely related article by Giangreco, Smith and Pinckney (2006) is not a research study, but rather a report on how the Williston (Vermont) School District applied, over a three-and-a-half-year period, Giangreco and Broer's 2003 *Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals* (which incorporates the 16-point screening tool) to address this perceived concern. The self-study by the Williston schools had six outcomes: 1) More of the responsibility for directing the work of paraeducators was shifted from special educators to classroom teachers. 2) Special educator caseload size was reduced. 3) The number of special education paraeducators was reduced. 4) Emphasis was shifted from individually assigned paraeducators to classroom-assigned special education paraeducators. 5) Development of a model of service delivery that allowed flexibility in providing an appropriate level of support in each classroom, depending on number and range of students with and without disabilities. And 6) affected families were informed of expected benefits from these changes. The authors recognize that the Williston schools effort is a work-in-progress and offer their description as an interim report about an on-going effort.

Carter, Sisco, et al. (2007) examined the effectiveness of peer-support interventions at improving social and academic outcomes for high school students with severe disabilities enrolled in core academic classrooms. The subjects were four students

with severe disabilities included in general education settings and four classmates without disabilities who acted as peer supports. The high school in question was large, ethnically diverse, and located in a midsized metropolitan school district. The study was localized to science and art classrooms. Method: measured observations of coded activities. Their investigators concluded: 1) Peer social interactions of the disabled participants *increased* when these students received additional and ongoing support from a classmate rather than a paraeducator or a special educator. 2) Peer-support arrangements seem to sustain ongoing academic engagement for students with moderate to severe disabilities at least as well as individually assigned paraeducators, but improvement in the students' active engagement with the curriculum remained lower than anticipated.

In summary, this review of the literature about paraeducators appears to indicate this as a subject on which insightful new research is being carried out, but one on which more remains to be done. Do the academic benefits of having a paraeducator continually accompanying a student with severe disabilities outweigh the negative effects of semi-isolation and inhibited socialization? Perhaps even more important, the one article that incorporates the insights and opinions of actual students with disabilities flags a topic and a method that offer rich possibilities for future qualitative study, not just of the paraeducator but of other key figures in the education of students with disabilities as well. Bullying of such students, discovered nowhere else in the literature, urgently demands further investigation and recommendations for remedial action.

Administrator Perspective

Although it would appear to be self-evident that school administrators must play a key role in the success of inclusive education within their schools, surprisingly little has

been published about them and their attitudes. Both teachers' (Hamre-Nietupski, et al, 1999) and parents' (Lake & Billingsley, 2000) experiences with, and attitudes toward, inclusion have been studied, but efforts to get at the administrators' side of the story have been few and far between.

In this section of the literature review I discuss three articles addressed to school administrators. Tourgee and DeCue (1992) wrote a "how to" manual for administrators implementing inclusion in their schools. Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) study presents 32 principals' self-reported evaluation of their attitudes toward and knowledge about inclusion. Boscarden's (2005) work on administrators and inclusive education is not a report on empirical research but an advocacy essay emphasizing that a principal must be *leader* for school change. Those few administrator studies which are based on empirical research provide quantified results, but predominant trends and patterns are difficult to detect in the reported data.

Tourgee and DeClue (1992), writing in *The Principal Letters: Practices for Inclusive Schools*, offered a variety of structured and practical guidance for a schools' top administrator on nearly 40 topics ranging from "What behaviors does a principal need to be a special education instructional leader?" through "How can the attendance of special education students be improved?" and "How do you discipline students with disabilities?" to "What building modifications will be necessary to meet standards?"

Although Tourgee and DeClue's suggested answers and resources for addressing these questions appear to be eminently practical and must have been helpful to many school principals, the authors offer no indication whether the material they present is based on empirical studies or whether they are offering answers drawn from their own

experience. This is an excellent and helpful article on the role of the administrator in an inclusive school, but it is not a report of field research.

Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) investigated principals' "attitudes toward and knowledge of inclusion" in Illinois. The study involved a small sample and had a low response rate. They reported results from questionnaires returned by 16 junior high and 16 senior high principals. The study is limited to one state, and—as the authors acknowledge—it tells what the respondents *say* their attitudes and practices are, not how those attitudes might appear to an outside observer or a supervisee. No clear trends can be detected in the responses as reported by the authors: knowledge, attitudes, and practices with respect to inclusion ranged across the potential spectrum.

Parents think that their degree of positive involvement with the schools is a key factor in the success of their children's inclusive education (Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996). One of the educational practices that received the lowest rating from the principals was that of parent education support group for parents of children with disabilities. There appears to be a marked difference between the perceptions of the parents and those of the principals on the role and value of parents of children with disabilities in the school.

Boscarden's (2005) work on administrators and inclusive education is not a report on empirical research but an advocacy essay based on a review of recent scholarship. Her article reflects the current federal mandate for assessing outcomes and for building educational strategies and practices on "scientifically based" findings. Boscarden defines administrators to include "principals, guidance directors, curriculum supervisors, department chairs, and special education directors," although the article itself seems to

speak primarily to the role of principals. Boscarden advocates for the use of a problem-solving model, and she argues that the school administrator must move away from the role of manager and become a *leader* for educational change in creating an evidence-based learning environment for all students in the school. This is not to imply that Boscarden endorses a top-down administrative model; throughout she argues strongly for a team approach that involves all stakeholders in finding solutions through a problem-solving environment inspired and led by the school administration. Boscarden states that "historically, the special education director has been in charge of the educational programming for students who meet the eligibility criteria to receive special education instruction," with the principal happily leaving this responsibility to the special education director while the principal's attention was focused elsewhere. This model, Boscarden contends, must change, with the principal embracing with enthusiasm responsibility for the educational program of *all* students in one seamless spectrum.

In concluding this extended examination of the existing literature on elementary and high school inclusion, and parent, teacher, paraeducator, and administrator perspectives, some general observations seem appropriate. As stated earlier, research studies on high school inclusion are far fewer in number than those on elementary school inclusion; fewer still are the studies focused on administrators. There is also a significant methodological problem: many studies that include high school students among the subject populations fail to disaggregate the high school participants in reporting results. If the literature on school administrators and high school inclusion is thin; that on teacher attitudes is larger and more diffuse, but difficult to generalize. The most stimulating and provocative research has looked at parent attitudes about inclusion, parent-school

relations for students with disabilities, and the positive—but at the same time potentially restrictive—role of the paraeducator in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

A qualitative ethnographic research design was used to address the research questions of this study. In this chapter the theoretical framework that supports the research design is discussed; the setting, participants, and the qualitative research data sources and collection methods are described; and the process of data analysis is explained. The limitations of the study, as well as the impact of the researcher as the data collection instrument, are also discussed.

Appropriateness of Qualitative Design

The primary purpose of this study was to learn about the process of inclusion for a student with severe disabilities in high school general education classes from the viewpoint of the parents and educators; that is, individuals who would be the typical members of the IEP team—school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants, and parents. This is a descriptive study of the inclusion of one student with severe disabilities in eight different general education classes, a homeroom, a study hall, and an extracurricular activity (i.e., participation in an all-school musical production). The student's inclusion is an example of a complex social process shaped by the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of the parents and educators. In a qualitative ethnographic research study, description and interpretation of the inclusion process is only possible in context , and any effort to share what is learned from the parents and educators requires an awareness of the context (Merriam, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Inclusion is an integral part of the school setting where it occurs and is best examined within the school setting.

Inclusion has different meanings for different people. The goal of this study was to learn about the inclusion process from the perspective of the parents and educators involved in the inclusion of one student with severe disabilities. Rather than attempting to impose a definition of the inclusion process from the research literature, the purpose of this ethnographic case study was to learn how these parents and educators came to understand and describe their experiences with a student who has severe disabilities and who was included in high school general education classes.

Two features, the need for *rich description* to communicate the context within which the inclusion process took place, and the goal of understanding behavior from the *participant's own frame of reference*, may be achieved with qualitative research methods (Wolcott, 2008). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) offer this description of the features of qualitative research:

> …the data collected have been termed *soft*, that is, rich in descriptions of people, places and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions … are formulated to investigate topics in all of their complexity, in context. While people conducting qualitative research may develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with … hypotheses to test. They also are concerned as well with understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference.

In addition there are five key features of qualitative research which are incorporated into the present study. First, the study is *naturalistic* (Patton, 2001). In qualitative research, the setting and the people in the setting are the data and the researcher is the "instrument" which obtains the data. Data are collected primarily through in-depth interviews and participant-observation. Second, the study utilizes *descriptive data* (Creswell, 2007). The data take the form of words and observations

rather than numbers. This form of data is used because the researcher is looking for knowledge and understanding rather than a definitive answer. Third, the study is concerned with a *complex social process* (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). By looking at one student over time through the perceptions of the parents and educators, one is better able to understand the complex social process that is inclusion. Fourth, data are *analyzed inductively* (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data analysis uses a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. As when one puts together the pieces of a puzzle without first seeing the picture, the results of the data analysis take shape as the investigator examines the parts and then assembles them into a theme or series of themes. Fifth, the *search for meaning*, as it is understood by the participants, is the primary goal of the study (Merriam, 2009; Wolcott, 2009). For this reason, the study is primarily concerned with the perspectives of the key informants and with making sure that these perspectives are presented accurately. Unlike other research approaches, qualitative researchers attempt to answer their research questions holistically (i.e., contextually). The setting, its people, their activities, their interactions, and their points of view are all taken into account. Qualitative researchers interview participants, spend time in the setting in order to understand the context in which behaviors occur, and review documents related to the focus of the research in order to construct the meaning a particular situation has for the people who are a part of it (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Wolcott, 2009).

In summary, qualitative research methods were an appropriate match for the purposes of this study. This study provides both description and analysis which made it possible to answer the investigator's research questions. Those questions relate to the

adults involved and their experience of including a student with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school for the first time:

1) How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it? What role did each of them play in preparing for the student's inclusion? How did each of them describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion?

2) Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process?

The Choice of Ethnographic and Case Study Research Methods

In his book *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (2007) John W. Creswell identifies five "traditions" in qualitative research: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The central purpose of the research determines the choice of methods. The focus of biography concerns the life of an individual. That of phenomenology is understanding a concept or phenomenon, while the purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theory. An ethnographic research design is chosen when the researcher wishes to gain knowledge and understanding of a particular culture-sharing group. A case study research design provides an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within a research setting with clear boundaries.

This qualitative study is an ethnographic case study. It is ethnographic because it looks at high school inclusion as a *sociocultural process* (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). That

is, the study seeks to uncover and describe the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior of a group (i.e., the IEP team). It is a case study because it is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a *single functioning unit* (i.e., one high school inclusion process for one student with severe disabilities) that circumscribes the investigation (Merriam, 2009).

To address the research questions within an ethnographic case study research design, the data were obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews, observation, and official educational documents. In order to provide an in-depth picture of the case I gathered contextual material from multiple sources. The following sections describe the setting, participants, data sources and data collection procedures, data analysis, limitations of the study, and my, the researcher's, role.

Setting

An understanding of the setting within which the events and experiences of the parents and educators take place is integral to data collection and data analyses in ethnographic research. In this study, the events that take place and the experiences of the parents and educators pertain to the inclusion of a young man with severe disabilities. This young man is described briefly because he is not the formal subject of this study. Thus, there are two foci for this section, the actual physical setting, a high school, and the student with severe disabilities included in general education classes in that setting. It is a "case" contained by time and place.

A Public High School in a Small Midwestern City

The locus of this study is one of two high schools in a small Midwestern city with a population of approximately 62,000 people. The ethnic character of the city is

approximately 54,000 white, 3,500 Asian, 2,000 Black, 1,800 Hispanic, and the remainder are other ethnicities (US Census, 2000). The participating high school had approximately 1,600 students, 200 of whom had individualized education programs (T. D., personal communication, October 28, 1999). The high school has a strong and self-identified tradition of academic excellence. When you enter the high school at the main entrance, the first thing that you are aware of is the display honoring alumni who have attained international prominence, including two Nobel laureates.

The school website offers this description:

> We are proud of the tradition of excellence in our academic and activities programs. [Our high school] provides students with the opportunity to enrich their lives through the high school experience. With over 150 course offerings, students can discover their strengths as they prepare for post-secondary opportunities. …it is our task to continue to improve in all areas…to keep [our high school] an educational leader in the state... Upon graduation from [high school], 70% of our graduates continue their education. Sixty percent attend four year colleges, 5% junior or community colleges, and 5% trade and technical schools.

Typically, students with severe disabilities attending this high school have received their special education services in self-contained classrooms with a minimal amount of inclusion into general education classes. The focus of the educational program for students with severe disabilities attending this high school is training in the functional skills needed for daily life and employment.

This site was chosen because: 1) inclusion of a student with severe disabilities was taking place at this high school for the first time; 2) I was able to begin my research at the very beginning of the inclusion process and follow the process for two years; 3) the parents were willing to participate in my research; 4) the administrators and educators at the high school were willing to participate in my research; and 5) the students and teachers are accustomed to having observers (e.g., parents, student teachers, university

professors and researchers) in their classrooms (this high school is in a university town). Familiarity with the experience of having outsiders in the classroom is an advantage, because I wanted the interactions of the participants in the setting to be as natural as possible. When a researcher is observing it is always a setting *with a researcher observing*, and it is impossible to know how much that influences the actions of the participants. However in a school setting where everyone is accustomed to regular visitors this problem is greatly diminished.

An Adolescent Included in High School General Education

The student in question was a male, 15-16 years old at the time of this study. He has severe disabilities which include partial paralysis, a visual impairment, and a moderate cognitive impairment caused by a traumatic brain injury. As a result of his injury, the student has an atypical gait and retains only the use of his left hand; his speech is not affected. His cognitive impairment causes difficulty with both short-term and long-term memory; nor does he have full visual fields. This student has a serious arousal disorder which makes it very difficult for him to stay awake. His writing is illegible; he must dictate to complete tests, essays, and other school assignments. The student reads at a second grade level, and his auditory comprehension is at 50% on grade level material. He can do basic mathematical operations and has always had an adapted curriculum for math instruction. Although the student has the disabilities described above, he is independent in all areas of daily living. His adoptive parents describe him as very friendly, well-liked by his peers, and cooperative, but lacking in judgment, focus, and language skills.

In high school the student's program consisted entirely of general education classes. He received his special education services from a resource room teacher who supervised his paraeducator. These special education services consisted primarily of support for the general education teachers and the paraeducator in the area of curriculum modifications. The paraeducator worked exclusively with the student; she attended most high school classes with him.

I wanted to follow this student's inclusion because 1) his education program consisted of all general education high school classes; 2) the high school had never included a student with severe disabilities in general education to this extent before, 3) I had worked for over two years with Dr. Susan Hamre-Nietupski, a scholar well known for her expertise in the area of severe disabilities and inclusion, on a similar research project involving three students with severe disabilities in elementary school; 4) I hold a master's degree in special education/mental retardation; and 5) before beginning my master's program I spent ten years teaching children with severe disabilities. This project aligned well with my training, experience, and interests.

Participants

For this study a total of 17 people were interviewed at least once over a two year period. The individuals interviewed included two high school administrators (the principal and assistant principal), three special education staff (resource room teacher and two paraeducators), eight high school general education teachers, two Area Education Agency (AEA) special education consultants, and the adoptive mother and father of the student with severe disabilities. *All the participants described below are identified by pseudonyms.* .

Other than the parents, these individuals were chosen because they were on the student's IEP team or because the student with severe disabilities attended their classes. These were individuals who typically would be on an IEP team. The IEP team shapes the educational plan for each student when they write the student's individualized education program.

IDEA states that

> The term 'individualized education program team' or 'IEP Team' means a group of individuals composed of –
> (i) the parents of a child with a disability;
> (ii) at least one regular education teacher of such child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment);
> (iii) at least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least one special education provider of such a child;
> (iv) a representative of the local educational agency who –
> (I) is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
> (II) is knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and
> (III) is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the local educational agency;
> (v) an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described in causes (ii) through (vi);
> (vi) at the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and
> (vii) whenever appropriate, the child with a disability.
> (IDEA 1997 § 1414 (a)(5)

School Administrators

The principal began her career as a teacher in the areas of social studies and language arts. Dr. Tracie D. taught in junior high and high schools before commencing work in administration. She worked as a guidance counselor for a middle school and then became an assistant principal in 1984. Dr. D. has been a high school principal since 1986. John C., the assistant principal in charge of special education, had held that

position for one year at the time of the interview. Before being made the administrative head of special education at the high school he had been in charge of discipline for the high school for two years. His previous experience included teaching bilingual education for three years and serving as a principal in a middle school for three years.

Special Education Staff

Susie W. has been teaching for 18 years. She has a master's degree in resource multicategorical programs. Five years of her teaching experience was at the secondary level. Ms. W. has been at the high school for three years. Both of the paraeducators were working on their master's degree in special education while employed full-time at the high school. Greg M. had a bachelor's degree in recreation therapy and experience working with children with autism. Karen C. had a bachelor's degree in elementary education and experience working with children with severe disabilities.

General Education Teachers

Corrine C. is the American Studies teacher. She has taught for six years at the high school and has had students with disabilities in her classes. Ms. C. has taught many students with learning disabilities as well as students with brain injury and cognitive disabilities. She taught the student in this study for one trimester.

Bob P. has taught band for 22 years. He has been at the participating high school for two years. He has other students who "go to the resource room" but has never had a student with disabilities as challenging as this student with his severe disabilities. The student was in band for his entire freshman and sophomore years.

Judith G. teaches State and Local Government, Behavioral Science, and Abnormal Psychology. She has taught for 24 years. This is her fifth year at the

participating high school. She taught the student in the study behavioral science for one trimester.

George G. has taught choir for 22 years. He has worked at the participating high school for eleven years. This student is only the second one Mr. G. has taught who has both physical and cognitive disabilities. He participated in the choir for all three trimesters both freshman and sophomore years.

Nancy K. is the drama teacher, and this was her first year at the participating high school. She has taught high school drama for six years. The participating high school stages four musical/drama shows a year. Nancy K. was the director of *Oklahoma.* The student with disabilities was a cowboy in the chorus for *Oklahoma* during his sophomore year.

Cathy G. teaches English. She has been a teacher for five years and had worked for the previous two years at the participating high school. The student attended her English class for his entire freshman year. She had never taught a student with severe disabilities before.

Marlene S. teaches Family and Consumer Science. She taught the student for three trimesters. He took the Foods class twice and Child Development for one trimester. Ms. S. has taught high school for 34 years, but had never previously taught a student with similar physical and cognitive disabilities prior to the present student's first enrollment in one of her classes.

Sally M. has taught at the participating high school for five years. She has been a high school teacher for seven years. Ms. M. teaches mathematics. She had never taught

a student with severe disabilities before having this student in her math class for his entire freshman and sophomore years.

AEA Special Education Consultants

Trudy R. started teaching in 1978. At that time she taught students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. Later she taught high school students with learning disabilities. Ms. R. taught students with behavioral disorders at both the elementary and secondary level for nine years, and she worked at a treatment facility as the educational director for four years. Ms. R. has worked for the AEA for three years as a special education consultant. At the time of her interview she was the Interim Regional Inclusion Facilitator for the AEA.

Mike C. was certified in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders as well as being certified as a secondary science teacher. He has worked as a special education consultant in the U. S. and overseas for 15 years. Mr. C. has worked for the AEA as a special education consultant for the last seven years.

Parents

The student's adoptive mother had a full-time job as an early childhood home interventionist for the AEA. She visited families at home and taught parents techniques to enhance the development of their young children, birth through six years, with developmental disabilities or delays. His father was a self-employed driver's education instructor. He worked out of his home and stated that his business was doing well. Prior to starting his own business, he was a resource room teacher. The parents stated that they were pleased that the father's employment allowed him to have flexible hours and be available for the children. They have four children, three boys and a girl. The three older

boys attend high school together, and their daughter is in elementary school. The student in the present study and one of the other boys are adopted and have disabilities, but are not biologically related.

I followed the student's inclusion for two years, during his freshman and sophomore year of high school. I interviewed both of his parents once each year; the principal of the high school during each of those two years; the assistant principal in charge of special education during the student's sophomore year; the special educator in charge of the student's program during the entire two years of his inclusion; his paraeducators for his freshman year; the AEA special education consultants for two years; and eight general education teachers who had him in their classes for one trimester, one year, or both years.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, observation, and examination of educational documents. Interviews were conducted for each of the two years that she followed the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities (See Table 1). In Year One I interviewed the parents, the principal, the special educator, paraeducator #1 and paraeducator #2, one AEA consultant, and four general education teachers. In Year Two, the parents, the assistant principal, the special educator, one AEA consultant, and five general education teachers were interviewed. Each interview lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. During the second year of the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities I spent five non-consecutive school days shadowing the student as he participated in his general education classes (see Table 2). During that time I took extensive *objective (e.g.,* student interacts with paraeducator, student opens notebook, classroom teacher interacts

with paraeducator) and *subjective* (e.g., student looks sad, paraeducator seems annoyed) field notes. Specific data about the student were gathered from educational documents in his cumulative education file, including information from his IEP. I also gathered samples of typical classroom activity worksheets. In all, the interview transcripts and the field notes taken during my observations generated over 500 pages of data. Each data source and the data collection procedures are discussed in the following pages.

Semi-structured interviews

In qualitative research interviews are commonly used to obtain data. The type of interview conducted by the researcher is determined by the type of information which the interviewer wishes to obtain. Three types of interview structures are possible: 1) a highly structured or standardized mode, 2) the semi-structured mode, and 3) the unstructured or informal mode (Seidman, 2006; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The highly structured or standardized interview will solicit specific answers to narrowly worded questions. The primary use of this type of interview is to gather socio-demographic data (e.g., degrees obtained, number of years teaching, subjects taught) from the respondent, or to ask the interviewee to respond to a particular statement, or to define a particular concept or term. It does not allow for subjective interpretation of the questions by the respondent and therefore does not elicit an individual's unique perspective (Seidman, 2006).

The semi-structured interview contains a mix of more- and less-structured questions. At some point in the interview the interviewer will use structured questions to obtain the demographic data he or she requires and may ask the interviewee to respond to a particular statement or define a particular concept or term, following which the

interviewer can ask less structured questions designed to elicit each respondent's unique perspective on the research topic. The questions used are open-ended and flexible. The interview is guided by the researcher's interest in a particular topic and subsequent subtopics but the exact wording of the questions and the order in which the questions are asked are not determined ahead of time. Flexibility in the interview process allows the interviewer to explore the perceptions of the respondent and to follow-up on new ideas as they are presented by the respondent (Seidman, 2006).

The unstructured or informal mode of interviewing is more like a conversation on a particular topic. This interview format is often used as a preliminary exercise to determine some of the subtopics that could be explored. Some time spent in an unstructured mode, even in a predominantly semi-structured interview, will allow for the respondent to raise subtopics which the researcher may not have considered or to add fresh insights related to the researcher's topic of interest (Merriam, 2009).

I constructed three interview guides (see Appendices A, B, and C) to assist me in the interviewing process. An interview guide is a list of questions one intends to ask in an interview (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2006). The interview guide is not a structured schedule or protocol. Rather, it is a list of general areas to be covered with each informant. In the interview situation the researcher decides how to phrase questions and when to ask them (Seidman, 2006; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

My interview guide included specific demographic questions, a request to define a term or concept, and semi-structured open-ended questions. I also allowed time for the interviewee to share any other thoughts she or he might have on the topic and tried to engage the interviewee in a conversation about the topic. The interview guides vary

slightly due to the different roles of the individuals being addressed (e.g., parent, teacher, administrator) but all of the interview guides address the same topics. I asked parallel questions across all the interviews.

At the heart of the interview guide are the questions. According to Patton (2002) there are six kinds of questions that can be asked of the respondents: 1) experience and/or behavior questions, 2) opinion/value questions, 3) feeling questions, 4) knowledge questions, 5) sensory questions, and 6) demographic/background questions. Experience or behavior questions are about what the respondent does or has done. These questions are aimed at eliciting descriptions of experiences, behaviors, actions, and activities that would have been observable had the interviewer been present. Opinion or value questions are aimed at attempting to understand the cognitive and interpretive processes of the respondent. The interviewer wants to know what the respondent *thinks* about a topic or event. Feeling questions are aimed at understanding the emotional responses of the respondent to his or her experiences and thoughts. Emotions are the labels human beings give their physical response to what happens around them or to them. Knowledge questions are asked to find out what factual knowledge the respondent possesses. The aim is to discover what the respondent considers to be "factual." Sensory questions are meant to elicit information about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled by the respondent. While these questions elicit a type of experiential data similar to experience questions, the aim of these questions is to obtain data on the experience of the senses. Background or demographic questions concern the identifying characteristics of the person being interviewed. Questions concerning age, gender, education, occupation, residence are typical demographic questions. Questions concerning behaviors, opinions,

feelings, knowledge, sensory data, and demographics include *all* the kinds of questions that it is possible to ask in an interview. Keeping these six types of questions in mind helps the interviewer plan a comprehensive interview guide.

Interviewing is a basic mode of inquiry. In education interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies. The most frequent form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information form another (Merriam, 2009). "At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language" (Seidman, 2006). Interviews obtain data that reflect behavior, attitudes, and experiences that take place while the interviewer is not present. I chose to interview the participants of my ethnographic case study because I wished to know about thoughts, feelings and events that were not observable by me in order to construct meaning (Seidman, 2006).

After having obtained the approval of the school district, I initially contacted each participant by e-mail. I introduced myself and explained my purpose, and I requested an interview to take place at a time and location of the participant's choosing. I had not met any of the participants previously. In all of the interviews that I conducted, I used a face-to-face format. Each participant was interviewed independent of the other interviewees. One interviewee came to my home to be interviewed; I interviewed two people in my university office; and the remaining interviews took place at the high school in the interviewee's office or classroom.

I provided each interviewee with an Information Summary and Consent Form which was part of the project submitted to (and approved by) the Human Subject Office at the university. The document included a brief overview of the study, assurances of

confidentiality, and an acknowledgement, signed by the interviewee, that he or she was being audio taped. The audio tapes were transcribed professionally. Every effort was made by the transcriber to include, not only the exact words of both speakers, but also any other sound that could be heard or any activity that was implicitly or explicitly indicated on the tape. All coughs, pauses, laughter, and similar sounds were included in the audio transcription.

Observation

When using participant-observation as a ethnographic research method, the researcher enters the world of the people he or she wishes to study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Wolcott, 2008). In this case it was a high school where a student with severe disabilities is being provided with a schedule of all general education classes for the first time. The degree to which the researcher "participates" in addition to observing may vary. In some situations the observer may have opportunities to participate in the activities of those she or he is studying. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) refer to this range of possible roles from active participant to passive observer as the "participant/observer continuum." Because of the limitations and structure of the setting, I was a full-time observer and did not participate at all in the setting's activities.

During my student's second year of inclusion I observed him participating in his high school classes and activities for five full school days (See Table 2). I observed him arriving, in his homeroom, in his classes, at lunch, during his study hall, and leaving the school. In order to observe the context within which this case study took place and not receive a skewed view because I was observing during one particular week, my observations took place over a five week period. I observed on a Monday the first week,

a Tuesday the second week, and so on from April 27 through May 19, 2000.

In qualitative research observation is a data collection procedure and the field notes are the data (Merriam, 2009). Because there were many people in multiple settings, it was not possible to observe all of the activities and interactions that occurred. I focused on the student and his paraeducator most of the time, but I also observed his peers and teachers. While I was observing I took extensive field notes. My field notes included two types of information, descriptive and reflective. The descriptive part of the field notes recorded in objective detail the physical setting, the people involved in the interactions observed, accounts of the interactions observed, the reconstruction of any dialogue, and the behaviors of the participants in the setting as recommended by Taylor and Bogdan (1998).

As noted, in addition to descriptive material, my field notes contained reflective information, the subjective part of the observation experience. The emphasis of the reflective part of the field notes was "on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) relative to the student's inclusion in high school general education classes. The reflective part of my field notes were interspersed with the descriptive notes, I used the notation "OC" to designate observer's comments. A typical day of observation generated from 15 to 20pages of single-spaced handwritten field notes, and described the activities, interactions, behaviors, and comments of the participants, as well as my reactions to what I was seeing and hearing. My field notes were transcribed, entered into my database, and coded in NVivo 8 (QSR International, 2008).

Documents

Documents can be categorized in different ways and sometimes these categories overlap. Personal documents, public records, and official documents are common types of documents (Merriam, 2009). In addition visual documents (e.g., films, videos, photos) and popular culture documents (e.g., newspapers, television, Internet blogs) are abundantly available (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Personal documents can be broadly defined as any first-person narrative that describes an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs (e.g., diaries, letters, scrapbooks). Official documents include internal communications that are circulated within an organization. Such documents often allow only limited access (i.e., student records, and personnel files). Official documents are also external communications that are produced by an organization for public consumption (i.e., newsletters, yearbooks, flyers sent home) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

The documents I collected were primarily official documents, including interschool memos, the student's class schedule, sample worksheets from the student's classes (e.g., Foods I, Sociology, Math), e-mail communication between his mother and the special educator, and notes I took when I was allowed to review my student's cumulative education file, including his medical history and IEP.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) find data analysis to be the most difficult and most crucial aspect of qualitative research. It is difficult because it is not fundamentally a mechanical or technical exercise. It is a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, reflection, and theorizing (Merriam, 2009). Through analysis, the

researcher attempts to gain a deeper understanding of what he or she has studied and to refine interpretations continually (Basit, 2003). The researcher draws on firsthand experience with the setting, informants, and documents to interpret the data (Bogdan & Bilkin, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Creswell (2007) divides data analysis in an ethnographic case study into five parts: 1) data managing, 2) coding and developing themes, 3) describing, 4) interpreting, and 5) representing. The researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles that spiral upward, in a process that allows him or her to produce a continually more detailed analysis. The researcher enters with data as text and exits with an account or narrative (Creswell, 2007). This analytic process contrasts with the more linear line of reasoning found in quantitative analysis.

Organizing the data, or data management, begins the process of data analysis. The researcher organizes data into file folders, index cards, and/or computer files. The data in this study has been organized into computer files. Each computer file contained one interview; the field notes were placed in one file. Computer software, NVivo 8, was used to organize and analyze the data.

Raw data do not help the researcher to understand the sociocultural process which is being studied, or the way the participants view it, unless the data are systematically analyzed to illuminate the existent situation (Merriam, 2009). Coding is one of the significant steps taken during analysis to organize and make sense of textual data. *Codes* or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the text compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to chunks of text of varying sizes: words, phrases, sentences or even whole paragraphs. Codes or categories can come from the concepts

that the researcher already has from professional reading, or are the words and phrases used by the informants themselves. The code can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one, such as a metaphor (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In an ethnographic case study it is important to gain a sense of the whole database. In order to accomplish this goal, I read transcripts of interviews, field notes, and documents to make sense of the whole before examining unique and individual pieces of data. I then read the data for a second time and made notes using short phrases, ideas, or key concepts related to the research questions. These phrases, ideas, and key concepts identified codes or categories that could be applied to words, phrases, or sentences within the data. The data set was divided into these codes or categories. The data in each category can be subdivided by new codes. This process continues in upwardly moving spirals creating ever more refined data sets (Ely, 1991).

Coding can be described as noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena, and analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures (Merriam, 2009; Wolcott, 2009). These commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures are referred to as the *themes* within the data. The researcher will ask questions, compare and contrast ideas across the data, change or drop codes as new insights are made, and place the coded data into a hierarchical order. Codes are both an organizing tool and an important part of the outcome. At its most useful, the process of establishing codes and themes has implications for descriptive reporting and theory building (Basit, 2003).

Data analysis included a detailed description of the inclusion of my student in general education classes in high school. Patton (2001) has this to say about the importance of description:

> Description is the foundation upon which qualitative research is built…Here you become the storyteller, inviting the reader to see through your eyes what you have seen…Start by presenting a straightforward description of the setting and events. No footnotes, no intrusive analysis—just the facts, carefully presented and interestingly related at an appropriate level of detail.

Data analysis is an interpretive process. When the researcher moves from the concrete description of observable data to a more abstract level of analysis he or she uses concepts to describe the phenomena in the data. This is the process of organizing the data into a schema of *codes* and developing *themes.* At a deeper level of interpretation the researcher makes inferences, develops models, or generates theory. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the process of "moving up from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. We're no longer just dealing with observables, but also with the unobservable, and are connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue." Ultimately, the data are represented in a narrative that can be augmented by tables, figures, and sketches. My study employs a thematic narrative to present the data. In this narrative, each theme presented evolved from the data analysis. The narrative provided orientation information to the theme, presented direct quotations from the data that support the theme, and offered commentary as to how the theme relates to the research questions (Creswell, 2007).

Researchers can accomplish the laborious task of coding and analyzing data manually, but electronic methods of coding and analyzing data are increasingly being used. I chose to use a software package, NUD*IST [non-numerical unstructured data

indexing, searching, and theorizing] Vivo, or NVivo, for coding, organizing, and analyzing the data in my study. NUD*IST was under development for over 10 years, and NVivo 8 is the most recent manifestation of the approach it represents (Baseley & Richards, 2000; Gibbs, 2002).

My reasons for choosing NVivo were 1) NVivo provides an organized storage system and the data files can be readily accessed; 2) the researcher can locate units of data easily, whether it is an idea, a statement, a phrase, or a word with a data file; 3) each unit of data can be coded with an unlimited number of codes so that data can be retrieved and organized in any number of patterns and themes limited only by the researcher's knowledge and imagination; and 4) the software enables the researcher to look at the database line-for-line and consider the meaning of each word, phrase, sentence and idea (Creswell, 2007).

Before I began my data analysis in NVivo I spent two days being trained in its use by an instructor from QSR International, the corporation that created NVivo. The coding procedure applied to the data obtained from the interviews and observations began by importing the Microsoft Word files of my transcribed interviews into the NVivo software program. These files are referred to as *internal sources* (words in italics are used in the NVivo program) and can be grouped in a number of ways. I grouped the files into folders, year one, year two, and then regrouped them as parents, administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, and AEA consultants across both years. Coding is defined by NVivo as "selecting source content and defining it as belonging to a particular topic or theme. By creating nodes and coding at them, you can catalogue your ideas and gather material by topic" (NVivo 8 Fundamentals, QSR International, 2008). I

created a list of possible codes based on my knowledge of the literature on children and adolescents with severe disabilities and their inclusion in general education, as well my reading of the data (see Table 3). These codes were entered into NVivo as *tree nodes*. I used two ways to code the data; highlighting the word, phrase, or more commonly the passage that I was interested in coding and then dragging it to the node. Or I would highlight the passage first and then create an appropriate code/node. Passages coded in NVivo can immediately be recoded at any additional node when more than one idea is present. Each coded passage becomes a *reference*.

I also created five *sets* composed of the same *sources* that I had previously grouped into folders; parents, administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, and AEA consultants. I needed to create *sets* because I wanted to run *queries*. While folders and sets can have the same content, the program requires one to create folders first and then, if you want to run *queries,* requires that the documents be organized into *sets*. A *query* is a way of asking questions about your data. As a check on my coding, I ran a series of queries looking for key words from the codes (e.g., inclusion, adaptations, paraeducator). I was satisfied that my coding was comprehensive when I discovered no new information by running queries.

I then began to read the content at each tree node in order to determine how that topic might relate to my research questions. I noted which topics were pertinent to each research questions: defining inclusion; preparing for inclusion; the actual process of inclusion; and the alignments and tensions between those centrally involved in the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school. Simultaneously, as I read through the data coded at each tree node, themes or common

elements and ideas emerged. I then organized the responses of the interviewees coded at the tree nodes under each broad heading according to these common elements or themes.

Though qualitative research does not and cannot capture an objective "truth" or "reality," there are a number of strategies that a qualitative researcher can use to increase the credibility of his or her findings—or as Wolcott (2005) writes, "increase the correspondence between research and the real world." Triangulation is a frequently used strategy to increase the internal validity of a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009).

There are four types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, multiple data sources, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). This study uses multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, and document review. I checked the information that I gathered from my interviews against both my observations and my notes from my document review. I did not find any significant differences among these sources.

Researcher's Role

It is difficult for me to judge what effect, if any, that I may have had on the research setting or any of the participants. The participants knew that I was a doctoral candidate and that the interviews they were giving would become the data for my doctoral thesis. All of the individuals that I interviewed did so voluntarily. Some of the general educators and one paraeducator declined to be interviewed. I asked all of the student's general education teachers for at least one trimester from each of his freshman and sophomore years to be interviewed. Out of a total of seven general education teachers each trimester four agreed to be interviewed about his freshman year and five

during his sophomore year. I felt that both the parents and the special educator were especially comfortable talking to me. Our conversations (i.e., the interviews) were relaxed and I judged, based on the kinds of things they were willing to discuss, that the interviewees were being frank and open with me. I also felt that, overall, the general educators, administrators, paraeducators, and consultants were very willing to talk to me. The administrators and consultants had less "hands-on" experience with the student's inclusion process; their responses to the interview questions were more general than the interviews of the parents, special and general educators and paraeducators. A few of the general educators were somewhat reticent, but others seemed to be glad to talk to someone who was interested in their work. The paraeducators were more cautious in their responses than any other group. I attribute that to an awkwardness that they felt because they are well aware that they are at the bottom of the school's educational hierarchy; they seemed reluctant to make any statements that might contradict what the other interviewees had said. Unfortunately, paraeducator #3 simply refused to be interviewed. A great deal was said about her by others in the round of interviews covering sophomore year. All of it was good. I am at a loss to guess why she would refuse to talk to me.

I believe that, because this high school is in a university town, the process of being interviewed by a researcher was much less intimidating for these individuals than might be expected in a similar situation in a different setting. In fact, it is not unusual for an elementary or high school teacher in this community to have a master's degree or even a doctorate. The people who live in this community are used to "professors" and so they were, for the most part, comfortable talking to me.

When I visited the school, whether for an interview or an observation, I attempted to maintain a low profile. I dressed and behaved in a manner consistent with the teachers in the building, and I endeavored to follow all of the requirements for visitors. When I contacted the individuals I wanted to interview, I did so by e-mail because I did not want them to feel pressured to comply with my request. When I was in a classroom I found a position from which to observe that was as unobtrusive as possible. I took my notes and did not interact with anyone. I did occasionally ask the paraeducator a question about what was happening, but only in the hall between classes. Even so, by the end of my fifth day of observation, I was told by the special educator that the student with severe disabilities didn't want me to come back. This surprised me, because he seemed hardly aware of my presence, and I had no sense that he was uncomfortable. I called his parents and apologized for making him uncomfortable at school. His parents had no idea what I was talking about. Clearly someone had enough of my hanging around. I think that my attempt to be "a fly on the wall" had unintended and negative consequences. Paraeducator #3 appeared unhappy to have me shadowing her and her student. At one point I asked her where the student was and she answered, "I don't know. This is my lunch hour." More than once I was told to just wait for her in such and such a place. I did not try to be sociable or particularly friendly, because my goal was to be unobtrusive. I realize in retrospect that, especially in a culture where people are generally friendly, I must have appeared cold and aloof. My mistake was not showing the paraeducator my notes for each day and even asking her if I had "got it right." If she had seen my notes, I believe that she would have realized that I was not a threat to her.

Because this study revolved around the issue of inclusion, I was as neutral on this

topic as possible in any conversation I had "off tape" with my informants. I let them know that I was in favor of inclusion, but at the same time I acknowledged the difficulties surrounding inclusion especially for a student with severe disabilities. In passing, both the mother and the special educator asked me who I was working with at the university. I answered Susan Hamre-Nietupski. Dr. Hamre-Nietupski is well known for her pro-inclusion stance and her efforts to get more students with severe disabilities included in public schools. I cannot know if this information influenced the way that they responded to my questions. But I can say that when I interviewed the special educator for the second time I felt that we had developed a real rapport and that she was very honest with me. Of course the parents were delighted to think that I was pro-inclusion.

Addressing Validity and Reliability Issues

All research aims to produce valid and reliable knowledge. Each research study, whether quantitative or qualitative, can be assessed as to its validity and reliability by careful attention to the study's conceptualization, the manner in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented. In qualitative research the criteria for determining if a study is valid and reliable are different than they would be for a quantitative study, because the goal of the research is different. In a quantitative study, testing a hypothesis is usually the purpose; in a qualitative study, the goal is acquiring new knowledge through a deeper understanding of the context, phenomena, and people.

The validity and reliability of the knowledge acquired through qualitative research is determined by analyzing the methodology and findings of the study. *Internal validity is dependent upon how congruent the research findings are with reality.* One of the

assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing (Creswell, 2007). What is being determined in qualitative research is the participants' view of reality. Because a human being is the instrument of data collection and analysis, the participant's view of reality is accessed directly through the researcher's interviews and observations. If the goal is to determine the participant's view of reality, then internal validity is a strength of qualitative research. The researcher hears the informant's viewpoints and records for him- or herself the "truth" of various statements made by the informant. *The statements are therefore congruent with the informant's reality.* The internal validity of any study, quantitative or qualitative, is only as reliable as the data collection instrument. In this case, because I am the research instrument, it depends on my ability to accurately record the data.

Qualitative researchers use a number of strategies to insure internal validity. The replication of the interview protocol with 17 respondents made it possible for me to feel confident of the internal validity of the data. I used three different data collection techniques: interviewing, observation, and official document review. I used the triangulation of these three data collection methods to insure the internal validity of this ethnographic case study.

Data analysis can be influenced by the biases of the researcher. Coding is at the heart of qualitative data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen; 2006, Patton, 2002). Assigning a label or code to individual units of text characterizes or categorizes each unit. These units are then associated with each other based on those codes, and patterns are discovered. The accuracy of the coding of the data will influence the internal validity of the subsequent data analysis.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other similar situations (Merriam, 2009). Can the findings be generalized? It is not possible to generalize from one ethnographic case study about one young man with severe disabilities and his inclusion in high school general education classes to any other instance of high school inclusion. This is a distinct limitation of the present study and of all qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers believe that human thoughts and actions are not idiosyncratic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) . It is the job of the qualitative researcher to provide enough detailed description of the study's context, methods, and findings so that the readers can compare it to their own situation and decide whether or not there are any useful parallels. One hopes that the findings of this study will strike a familiar chord in the reader and provide useful knowledge.

Internal reliability in qualitative research refers to the quality of the application of the methods used (Creswell, 2007). The quality of the interview depends not only on the questions asked but how they were asked. Was the respondent given enough time to answer fully? Was the researcher's position on the topic known to the respondent? Did it influence the response? The quality of the researcher's observations also can be influenced by his or her beliefs. Did the researcher clearly indicate in the field notes which material was subjective and which was objective?

The internal reliability of qualitative research is always impacted by the individuals involved in the context being studied who do *not* agree to be interviewed. In my case study I was able to interview all the critical participants with the exception of some of the student's general education teachers and paraeducator #3. I interviewed four of his seven general education teachers for one trimester of his freshman year and five of

his seven general education teachers for one trimester of his sophomore year. The extent to which the viewpoints of teachers interviewed and not interviewed (the latter, of course, being unknown) differ impacts the internal reliability of the study.

External reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Creswell, 2007). If the study is repeated, will the researcher produce the same findings? If a researcher were to copy my case study using a different context, the results could be similar, but they would not duplicate my case study. If another researcher returned to the same school and the same people, the results would not duplicate my case study because the context studied has changed. Reliability in quantitative research is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield similar results (Tawney & Gast, 1984). Clearly, qualitative research does not meet the criterion of replicability. Qualitative researchers assume that there are multiple realities which are always in flux and that each researcher will view those realities through the prism of his or her own reality (Creswell, 2007).

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This ethnographic case study has both strengths and limitations. One of the strengths of this study is its internal validity. My study has internal validity because my research procedures included interacting personally with the context and the participants—the best way to determine the "reality" of that situation (Creswell, 2007). A limitation of all qualitative research is the fact that it is not generalizable to the larger population and therefore does not have external validity. An additional strength of this study is its internal reliability. Great care was taken to record the interviews accurately and distinguish between objective and subjective observations. Multiple sources were

compared and contrasted to provide triangulation. It has internal reliability to the extent that the methods used were applied thoughtfully and consciously, with careful attention to following the best practice for each protocol. An additional limitation of this study and all qualitative research is that it did not have external reliability. It cannot be replicated exactly because a researcher in another context will see and hear things that are different than I did. Even if the researcher were able to duplicate the context and participants exactly, that researcher would relate to those data through the prism of her or his own reality.

An unavoidable limitation of any qualitative research that involves interviews and observations is that some individuals will not agree to be interviewed and observed. The question always remains: What would the ones who did not want to talk to me have said? The school district and high school administrators appear to be in favor of including students with severe disabilities in general education classes when that is the expressed wish of the parents. The high school teachers who had a student with severe disabilities in their classes and were *not* in favor of his presence there would be the ones most likely to avoid speaking with me. They would not wish to express ideas contrary to the administration's position. To that extent I felt that this study was biased. I believe I spoke primarily to teachers who were supportive of including a student with severe disabilities in their general education classes.

A future research design could include an exploratory study or preliminary investigation to determine the best focus for the research and to define better the interview questions. In addition, one could conduct more observations before beginning the study. Doing the observations first could generate questions to be asked at the

interviews or, alternately, it could be beneficial to conduct follow-up interviews after the observations. Future studies could focus on the general education teachers and explore specifically how they included a student with severe disabilities in their general education classes.

Table 1. Key Informants Interviewed During The Student's Freshman and Sophomore Years

	Key Informants	Pseudonym	Interviewed During the First year	Interviewed During the Second year	Pages in Interview (typed/single-spaced)
Administrators	Principal	Tracie D.	▲[1]	□[2]	13
	Assistant Principal	John C.	□	▲	34
Special Education Staff	Special Educator	Susie W.	▲	▲	79
	Paraprofessional #1	Greg M.	▲	□	16
	Paraprofessional #2	Karen C.	□	▲	14
General Education Teachers	American Studies	Corrine C.	▲	□	14
	Concert Band	Bob P.	▲	▲	34
	Behavioral Science	Judith G.	□	▲	19
	Choir/H. S. Singers	George G.	▲	□	15
	Drama	Nancy K.	□	▲	22
	English	Cathy G.	▲	□	23
	Family and Consumer Science/Foods I	Marlene S.	□	▲	25
	Math	Sally M.	□	▲	16
Area Education Agency Special Education	Consultant #1	Trudy R.	▲	□	24
	Consultant #2	Mike C.	□	▲	29
Parents (jointly interviewed)	Father	Tom R.	▲	▲	79
	Mother	Sandy R.	▲	▲	00
Total			11	11	456

Key: [1] ▲ = interview; [2] □ = no interview

Table 2. Observations of The student in His General Education Classes and Activities

	Day and Date [1]					
Time	Monday May 15	Tuesday May 9	Wednesday May 3	Thursday [2] April 27	Friday May 19	Teacher was interviewed
8:10 AM	Sociology I	Sociology I	Sociology I	Sociology I	Sociology I	□ [3]
9:10 AM	Foods I	Foods I	Foods I	Foods I	Foods I	▲ [4]
10:10 AM	Concert Band	Concert Band	Concert Band	Concert Band	Concert Band	▲
11:10 AM	Study Hall	9-10 PE	Study Hall	Study Hall	9-10 PE	□
12:10 PM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	□
12:30 PM	Math Skills	Math Skills	Math Skills	Math Skills	Math Skills	▲
1:30 PM	H.S. Singers	H.S. Singers	H.S. Singers	H.S. Singers	H.S. Singers	▲
2:30 PM	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	□
3:30 PM	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	□

[1] Dates were chosen, one day each week for five weeks, to provide a randomized observation experience.

[2] On Thursday the school district has early dismissal, each class is shortened by ten minutes.

[3] □ = no interview

[4] ▲= interview

Table 3. NVIVO Project Report: Node Summary

Type	Name	Sources	References
Tree Node	Academic goals	10	16
Tree Node	Adaptations and accommodations	16	20
Tree Node	Administration	6	7
Tree Node	AEA consultant	5	6
Tree Node	Band	12	25
Tree Node	Change anything in the previous year	16	19
Tree Node	Communicating with parents	9	12
Tree Node	Defining inclusion	16	25
Tree Node	Demographics	16	30
Tree Node	Family	14	20
Tree Node	Gen Ed classroom	3	4
Tree Node	Gen Ed teacher	8	8
Tree Node	Grading	7	30
Tree Node	Homework	16	20
Tree Node	IEP team	13	20
Tree Node	One word	16	34
Tree Node	Outcomes	16	42
Tree Node	Paraeducator	16	48
Tree Node	Parents	6	6
Tree Node	Peer support	4	4
Tree Node	Preparation	16	29
Tree Node	Process	16	42
Tree Node	Socialization	16	55
Tree Node	Special Ed staff	16	45
Tree Node	The Play	4	4
Tree Node	Vocational	11	14

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The data of this study were accessed by using qualitative research methods (i.e., interviews, observations, and document review) and the results from the data are best interpreted by presenting a series of themes and thematic narratives obtained from the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 2008). The questions which this study addressed relate to the adults involved and their experience of including a student with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school for the first time:

1) How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it? What role did each of them play in preparing for the student's inclusion? How did each of them describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion?

2) Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process?

The themes and supporting quotations for those themes are presented for each aspect of each research question. In this chapter I see my responsibility as one of presenting in an organized manner, with a minimum of connecting narrative, the data discovered in my field work. I seek to let my informants speak with a minimum of

interference from me. In Chapter Five I will discuss the data and the overall implications of this study.

Research Question One Part A

How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it?

Inclusion: A great concept but **…**

The teachers, parents, administrators, and AEA consultants whom I interviewed all agreed that inclusion was the right thing to do, but with various subtle and not so subtle caveats. A typical response was "giving kids as much of a normal high school experience as possible for their particular disability" and "taking students, with either mental or physical disabilities, and incorporating them into the mainstream classroom and student life." The responder, at the same time, felt that "there are some dangers in it and probably some drawbacks to that philosophy." Another response was "Well, I think in general the idea of inclusion is very good. I'm for that, you know, exposure to, you know, the general population. I believe everyone should have the same opportunities. In practice, I think it works for some individuals and for some individuals it doesn't. It's not—it's not something that, that's going to work for every single person."

While all of the interviewees appeared to have a positive view of inclusion, each group of responders (administration, consultants, general education, special education, and parents) had a slightly different viewpoint.

Administrators

The inclusion ideal can push schools to provide more than they can/should. For students with low-incidence disabilities the tension that exists for many educators between the concept of inclusion and the reality of the expectations that our educational system and the public have about the function and purpose of a high school education is apparent in the responses. As one principal but it, "how can you be inclusive of 150 kids a day" (a typical high school teaching load). The principal also voiced concerns about maintaining certain standards, stating that the community expects the student whose transcript indicates that he has completed a course in Algebra I to "know this amount of knowledge, and we're trusted to maintain those standards for the body of knowledge."

The assistant principal believes that parents do not want special treatment for their child with a disability, stating "I don't think they want you to go above and beyond what you would for any other kid." The assistant principal is also concerned about the idea of including students in general education classes for socialization purposes only. He asks: Where is the meaningful instruction in an educational program that has a student in general education classes all day long for socialization (the ostensible reason that this student in this study was in general education classes)? He states it this way, "I'm not comfortable yet going to the point of that's the only reason we do school for [this student], so [he] can have seven periods of socialization." The assistant principal's goal is to have this student in classes where he can have socialization and receive some meaningful instruction as well. At the same time he is concerned that parents ask for more than the school's resources can provide. He puts it this way: "I do look at not going above and beyond. And I guess, a phrase that I could use is … we give 'em a lot of times

the automobile, but we don't necessarily always give 'em a Cadillac. And I think we have to be careful about that, because I think sometimes parents do want the Cadillac."

Special Education Staff

The special education teacher endorses inclusion within certain parameters:

> I think that a student who is able to reasonably go into classrooms, you know, doesn't have to have the exact skill level that everybody else has, but if the person can go into that classroom with support and not impede the progress of others I think that they have that right to do that. And if the expectations of the guardians are realistic, it's got to be reasonable and realistic.

She continues by defining the goal of inclusion for this student as socialization, not academics:

> I would say this inclusion is including a student that is way below expected grade level and needs a lot of assistance to get through the day because of certain health needs, physical needs. You know, that's how I define it in these types of cases. And has different goals than the rest of the students, yet has parallel goals and has maybe a vision of socialization rather than academic attainment.

Paraeducator#1, year one, talks about the importance of respecting the student's choices within the inclusion model:

> I think it needs to be more what the individual wants rather than what the parents and the school system want. Because I've worked with individuals who are included in situations, and they just didn't want to be included, you know. And that's gonna deeply affect their situation. And so, so, you know, if the individuals can voice what they want out of inclusion, then we should work around that rather than … saying inclusion is the best and this is what you are going to be—included—no matter what..

Paraeducator#2, year one, likes the idea of inclusion in principle but does not believe it can work for all students with severe disabilities. She goes on to say that even a student who is fully included may need some resource room support:

> I think in general the idea of inclusion is very good … I believe everyone should have the same opportunities. In practice, I think it works for some individuals and for some individuals it doesn't … And then there's different degrees of inclusion. You know, someone who's fully included, in specific classrooms may require,

you know, some resource [room support] on the side.

General Education Teachers

During the student's inclusion his general education teachers responses indicated that they were typically open to, and positive about, the concept of inclusion: "It's giving kids as much of a normal high school experience as possible for their particular disability." Another teacher responded: "It's taking students, with either mental or physical disabilities, and incorporating them into the mainstream classroom and student life."

Teachers tended to define inclusion based on their own unique experience. The English teacher responded: "I think it's, I think it's a good thing. She also said: "I mean, and I only have [this one student] to work from. It's really my only inclusion." Then she spoke about the difficulty she and other teachers have implementing inclusion. "It's hard. I mean it's hard for everyone involved. It's hard for students; it's hard for the teachers, because you have such diverse needs. [This student] was actually easy for me because the academic expectations weren't the same." Because he did not have any academic goals in his English class, the teacher felt relieved: "And that's a really easy thing to work with because then you can say, Alright, then I'm gonna make assignments for you that are, to help you find success so that you can feel good about what you're doing."

This teacher refers to "my only inclusion." But inclusion actually refers to any student who has an IEP spending part or all of the school day in general education classes. So in fact she has other "inclusion students." She continues by describing the increased difficulty she has with students whose IEPs provides academic expectations including the requirement that she give them a grade:

> I find it much more difficult with resource students because the academic expectations are the same with slight manipulations on an IEP. But they're still getting graded. Their grade still means the same thing on a transcript that it means on somebody else's transcript. And that's a little bit harder I think to deal with, because you want the students to be successful, you want to make modifications for them. But I think that sometimes we give them a false sense of security and a false sense of hope. Especially coming from … junior high having been always rewarded for what they do well. And high school is very different from that. And it's hard. And so you walk a fine line between having academic rigor in your classroom [and] trying to make sure the class is accessible to all students and that they can find success. But it needs to be realistic. And that is I think a very difficult thing to do.

How to approach and motivate her students who are "inclusion students" is a serious concern of this teacher:

> I was just watching a video. They're adults and they put them in a situation where they, they try to reenact what it would be like to be a special ed student. And the [teacher] is talking really fast and he's sort of in their face and, you know, saying, "What do you mean you don't know this?" And I think about that when I, when a student says "I can't do this." … So do you say, "You can do it" to try to encourage them or is that going to discourage them? Is, are you saying "Yes you can" when they know they can't. And so, I mean there are so many complexities that go on with it.

She seems to be saying that she still has doubts and concerns about implementing inclusion even though "We spend a lot of time at school doing special ed in-services and learning about special ed."

The Choir instructor defines inclusion this way: "Well, I guess I would define inclusion to … make them associate and socialize, learn, in the same atmosphere as, as [the general student body]." This teacher has typically had a positive experience with inclusion: "It's worked okay for me. I wouldn't say that it has adversely affected anything I've tried to do at all." But without elaborating, he adds this caveat: "I think there are some dangers in it. And probably [there are] some drawbacks to that philosophy."

The Band instructor responded: "It's a great thing. I think everything has to be kept, kept in perspective." His major concern is time management, trying to meet the needs of all of his students:

> I think we have a lot of kids to deal with in the program here. There's two of us [music teachers] and we have over 270 kids. And lots of times I don't feel like a normal student—well, quote "normal"—I mean your average kid—I don't feel like we have enough time to prepare for them as much as I'd like, let alone somebody that has special needs.

He and his co-instructor try to resolve this dilemma by following this philosophy:

> And I guess you kind of deal with it on two levels. There's one level is you try, whoever the student is, you're trying to deal with them as an individual and help them along the way to whatever it is, music or just growth as a person. Then you're also looking at the, at the whole group thing.

The Behavioral Science teacher focuses first on social inclusion and secondly on academics:

> I guess I look at it, when we're talking about inclusion we're talking about including kids into our general educational program the best way that we can depending on their disabilities and so forth. And abilities … When I'm given a student that is disabled, I'm very interested in how they're disabled. And … I look at inclusion from the social aspects first and the academic second.

Her goal for her students on IEPs is to: "include them in activities, include them in whatever we're doing. Sometimes it means changing lessons; sometimes it just means modifying them. And that's generally how I look at it."

At first, for the Drama teacher, inclusion and mainstreaming were synonymous terms: "The first way in which I was connected with inclusion was with, by a different term, and it was *mainstreaming*." She began thinking about the meaning of inclusion when she had a student with severe disabilities:

> And inclusion I think I've used the term more when I had a Down's Syndrome student included within my classroom. So I would define inclusion by, in a regular classroom, including all students, every student … whether it be with disabilities or even students who perhaps don't belong to particular nature of a

> class normally; and that they feel confident and feel so they can participate in all the activities. So I guess inclusion for me is all students are included within a classroom—even those students with disabilities.

For the first time in the teacher responses to defining inclusion the Math teacher uses the legal term "least restrictive environment." She responds that inclusion is:

> It's allowing the child well—okay, this is sort of a textbook kind of phrase here—allowing the child to be in the least restrictive environment. Which means including the child in as many regular education courses as that child is physically and mentally and psychologically capable of being included in.

The teacher of Family and Consumer Science is a woman with many years of experience. She does not immediately have a definition for inclusion. Her response indicates a dedicated teacher who stays focused on her students: "Gosh, I don't know. I guess I never thought too much about that. I just get 'em and I work with 'em." When pressed to give a more definitive answer, she responds: "We call it *mainstreaming* a lot." She is the first one to raise the issue of the benefit to nondisabled peers:

> I mean to me there's, there's kinda two sides to this. Because it is well for [students with disabilities] to be in the classroom with other students and interact with 'em. It's well for the other [non-disabled] students to have to interact with them because we're all going to encounter these different things once we get out into the world.

She goes on to express her concerns about teacher preparation being adequate to address what inclusion requires: "Well, it takes a lot of time, and I guess one of the things that concerns me is that when you're preparing to go into education, unless they've changed things considerably, you're not taught. I mean, I've had to learn this as I've gone along." Even when specific instruction on inclusion is provided for teachers, it is not always helpful: "And I have taken a class or two … But I do find that sometimes people who as usual are in education [as professors and consultants, apparently] and have not dealt with the wide range, are not too realistic about what has to be done, and how you work with

some of these students." Her comments also include references to some of the difficulties for teachers that come with inclusion:

> It makes for problems sometimes, because you have a lot of different levels of abilities. And so I've had to do a lot of changing of how I present curriculum or I have to do extra things to make sure that those students get as much information as the other students do. Because some of them can't read, some of them can't write. You know, there's all kinds of things going on there. So I have to present things in a lot of different ways so that they can get the information.

AEA Consultants

While other responders tended to couch their definitions of inclusion in terms of their actual experiences of inclusion, AEA consultants presented generic and almost textbook definitions. Thus AEA consultant, freshman year: "Inclusion for me is more than the idea of integration and mainstreaming. It's an attitude, a way of thinking, a belief system that we all belong and that we all have equal rights to be in the school community and have access to the services, to the activities, and to participate in the classroom with non-handicapped peers." And the sophomore year, AEA consultant's response was: "Well, you know, I believe he has a right and his parents have a right to expect an educational system to provide a place for him in the general ed curriculum … I think the challenge is to the system to flex, to bend, to accommodate."

The Student's Parents

The student's parents articulate their reasons for wanting inclusion in these words: "He wasn't real happy at that time [in the beginning of junior high school]. And we were seeing him becoming more isolated, and so we just said, 'Fine.' In the argument of why we wanted inclusion we finally said, 'Academics don't matter to us. We want this for social reasons.'" His parents *do* want inclusion for academics as well as socialization, but they feel the need to misrepresent their goals at the IEP meeting:

> We still have to say that at [high school]. They—people do not understand that [socialization and academics] go hand-in-hand … In fact we just had the IEP [meeting] and they—the first thing they said is, "[His] program is for socialization." They cannot understand that, yes, [he] is learning, too, in those classes. So we have the philosophy of "You're doing this for socialization reasons. We want him with his peers. We want him to be a part of their activities"—that kind of thing. [But] we, underneath, think he learns way more.

The student's mother goes on to explain that the developmental model (i.e., skills are taught sequentially and must be mastered in a prescribed order) being used to structure his instruction in junior high school was not working for him:

> He would have never been exposed to decimals, percentages, division, any of that stuff if he'd stayed in that special ed class, 'cause he would have never gotten quantities, because they were going for percentage, 90 percent (success) on these things. And they weren't going to move him to the next step until he mastered the lower level concept.

She continues to describe how much more her son is learning in general education classes, even though he does not have all the prerequisite skills:

> And he's been exposed to so much through general ed curriculum that he would have never been exposed to. And even though he doesn't understand the time frames, he could get—understand the message of—the Civil War, why there was World War I, World War II. As far as knowing, when they were studying the 1800s, how long ago that was, he doesn't get that. But he still could understand the lifestyle during that time period even though he can't get it in a sequence of time.

Although the student's parents are thrilled with his academic progress, the school staff remains focused on socialization: "So, the exposure to that stuff is incredible. But, if you ask the staff, they will not say he's included for those reasons. He's included for socialization."

Research Question One Part B

How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of

the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes prepare for the student's inclusion?

Lots of meetings…

Before my student's inclusion in general education high school courses the high school principal facilitated a meeting between the parents and his future high school teachers: "The spring before he came to us we had meetings with teachers, [paraeducators] that would be here at [high school], and his parents to help us understand who [he] was and what had been going on in his life up until this point. And that was very helpful."

At about that same time the assistant principal, year one, in charge of special education met with the student and his special education teacher at the junior high school: "on one occasion [the assistant principal] went over to the [junior high school] site and met with him and met with [the student] there at that site."

The special educator has a meeting with the high school teachers: "I met with them and I talked to them about [the student's] support needs, what his goals were, the vision of parents. I introduced them to [the paraeducator]. We talked about what her role would be, what my role would be, what their role would be." Although it is not unusual for parents to speak directly to their adolescents' high school teacher, the special educator set up a different communication system in this case: "And [I told them] that I would be the liaison between home/school communication, because it's just best. Otherwise you have, you know, the communication gets … fragmented."

The special educator describes a meeting between the student's teachers for the first trimester and his parents: "The teachers that are going to be [the student's] main

teachers. And the parents are there and we go over [the student] and who [he] is and what his support needs are."

As the teachers change for the second and third trimesters the special educator meets with these teachers individually:

> At the—each tri—when a teacher changes, I get to that teacher beforehand. Like, at least a week or two … And if they have any questions we connect with, you know, agencies that can answer questions or the school nurse. But basically things have been pretty well understood, because colleagues have been talking to colleagues and saying, "This is what he can and can't do … And this is what best works with him."

Least restrictive environment support-teacher position**.**

The new assistant principal in charge of special education, year two, describes a newly instituted program that facilitates the inclusion of students with severe disabilities: "I do know as far as this year, [but] we have kids coming from [junior high school] into [high school] next year that will be in a program called 'Least Restrictive Environment,' which just basically says they will be in all regular ed classes. And that's determined by an IEP team."

The special education teacher elaborates on the creation of the "Least Restrictive Environment" Program:

> Well, what happened last year is the [assistant principal] put into place a .2 position [one class period a day] called Least Restricted Environment position. Which meant like one period would be devoted to overseeing associates, because other associates were hired, too … And I was overseeing those three associates, plus two of the students, plus another student who has also more needs.

The special education teacher designed a notebook that went back and forth between home and school with the student. The information in the notebook was provided primarily by the paraeducator. The special educator also set up a structure so that she could communicate with the paraeducators on a daily basis: "Well, I met with the

paraeducator associate. The person would come up on my prep period and we'd sit down, we'd talk, we'd meet. I check the home/school communication notebook every day. I'd see what the person had written in it." Before a paraeducator began her or his job the special education teacher would provide training: "I'd sit down and we'd go through the whole IEP. Talked about confidentiality, the issues with that, the importance of that. We'd talk about behavior management. I mean it was a compact, let's say, in-service for an associate." The special educator also attended two workshops at the Area Education Agency which were designed to assist special educators in their training of paraeducators: "And I had gone to two workshops on training paraeducators." The special educator (LRE coordinator) goes on to comment on the response of the teachers to the student's inclusion: "I have been really amazed at the response of the teachers. No one has ever come to me and said, 'Hey, why is this kid in my room.' It's just basically been, 'Welcome.'"

The American Studies teacher tells it a little differently:

> Well, I guess I was asked. But, I remember [the special educator] came and told me when [the student] was in eighth grade that he'd be coming up here and she thought he'd be a good match for my class and would I?—is that okay? But that's not really—we don't have a choice. I mean, I said sure it was fine.

General education teachers wait and see.

When asked, "Did you do anything ahead of time to prepare to have [the student] in your class?" the American Studies teacher responded "No." His English teacher remembers the meeting with the parents: "One of the days before school started we met with the parents and all of his teachers and they filled us in on history, what was going on, what the expectations were. So I knew ... at least before school started. It wasn't as if … he walked into my classroom, and I was just like, 'What's going on here?'" She

continues that she did not really prepare for this student's attendance in her class: "Not right away simply because … part of what you need to do is figure out what's going on, what the person can do." And also because she began with an activity that did not require special preparation for the student's participation:

> I started off in a writing workshop and so that's much different. Because it was in a writing workshop, everyone's working at their level. And so that was just a matter of when assignments would come up we would make adjustments for him … If I had started the year differently—perhaps a unit, a short story unit or something—then I would have had to make other preparations, which I did when the time came.

The Band instructor did not feel a need to prepare ahead for the student's inclusion:

> You … have to find out where he's at, and how he functions, and what his level is. And I mean it takes—it took me a long, long time, and I'm still not quite sure where he's at, because sometimes he'll do some stuff that, "Oh, I didn't know he was capable." … Until I kind of figured out where he was at … there wasn't much preparation I could do.

The Mathematics teacher does not need to do any advance preparation for including him: "I don't have to do—I don't have to accommodate all that much for [his] disabilities. He does everything that everybody else does. So it doesn't take much, you know, separate preparation to prepare for [him] as opposed to the other students in the class."

For the Behavioral Science teacher the preparation for including this particular student in her class was an opportunity she had to know him ahead of time:

> I've known [him] for a couple of years. He was in American Studies class last year. And so I knew who [he] was because [the American Studies teacher] and I taught right next door to each other and [he] would come in and I'd talk to him. I knew who he was before, way before he ever went into my classroom.

Although this teacher is comfortable having him in her class, the short amount of time between trimesters can mean little or no time to prepare: "So we're already, you know, two weeks into this tri and we get these, 'Oh, these are the accommodations.'

That's a little late."

The Choir instructor is comfortable with having this student in his class because his wife taught him in junior high school, and they know him from the community: "And my wife, who also had him—my wife teaches at the junior high—and she told me a little bit about him. And actually we know … not his mother and father, but relatives [the student's adoptive father's brother and sister]. I knew a little bit about what to expect."

The special educator helps the Choir instructor to prepare for this inclusion: "And I know she sat down with me early in the year last year, and we talked about it a little bit. I'm just trying to think whether I had any preparation before the actual enrollment or before he actually showed up for class. And I honestly don't remember. They may—they may have sent out some information on it."

AEA consultants play a key role**.**

The AEA consultants have a large and continuing role in planning for this student's inclusion:

> We had a lot of discussion with the two [special education] teachers, the receiving teacher and the teacher that had him [in junior high school]. Talking about strategies—the junior high special ed teacher really provided a lot of mentorship, encouragement of how they made that change in philosophy and system in their building. The [IEP] team at the junior high came up with a time line of what they recommended for us to look at, a sequence of steps. The first one being that we needed to [choose a special educator to be the LRE facilitator.] The teachers met. The teacher in the high school, the special ed teacher [the LRE facilitator] , went over and observed. We met as a large group. We hand-picked teachers. And then we met with those teachers as a large group and talked to them about it. What were some of the strategies? Gave them e-mails of the teachers over at the junior high so they could communicate back and forth.

During the second year of this inclusion the AEA consultant continues to be a resource for the LRE facilitator and general education teachers:

> The teacher that [he] is assigned to is called an LRE teacher. And … her job is to

> be out working with general ed teachers, providing support, helping with accommodations, and things like that. So she does a lot of that type of thing. However, in meetings that we have on occasion … the general education teachers come in. I'm at those meetings. And I can kind of provide my input at that point.

And he attends all of the IEP meetings: "Yeah. I think I've been at every meeting we've had this year so far."

The parents seem content with preparation.

The parents seem satisfied with the initial preparation for their son's inclusion in high school:

> The [junior high school] was excellent about putting together a time line for transition planning—what they were gonna do at the IEP meeting. And then in January [of his eighth-grade year] they were going to call over to [the high school]. I mean there was a whole series [of meetings]. But anyway, they had done a time line transition plan and then it kind of ended with that [IEP] meeting.

The parents described how the high school helped prepare for the student during the summer before his inclusion:

> [He] also had heck week, which is the band's—marching band's—summer program before—it's the week before school starts—just major intense marching band practice. And so his associate [paraeducator] from [junior high school], covered that heck week, and was paid extended year to do all of the band things that he needed prior to his freshman year.

Research Question One Part C

How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion?

Previous inclusion influences current placement.

Previous inclusion in junior high school leads to inclusion in general education classes in senior high school. It is unlikely that the high school would have considered including this

particular student in general education classes if he had not already been included in junior high school. Certainly the AEA consultant (year one) would not have supported the inclusion in high school had he not been previously included in junior high:

> I would hate to start doing inclusion with a kid at the high school level. You know, where they were self-contained all the way up to high school. 'Cause there's no way that they could develop that network or circle of friends [in high school].

The special educator offers some historical perspective:

> There's a long history behind this particular case. And I know that [this inclusion] was probably generated more by [the] parent wanting that because [the] parent wasn't happy with the type of programs that were being offered in self-contained [setting]. Plus the concern was if he was—if he were—in this [self-contained] classroom with all students with behavior problems, then the behavior problems would be mimicked. And that's not what they really wanted. Plus they wanted experiences that would enrich socialization. I think that's one way it came about. It was a parent push. And then a team decided to try that out, I think at the junior high level. And the support was given—a full-time associate—and then from there the ball got rolling.

For the principal the junior high inclusion also provided a rationale for inclusion in high school:

> Well, this was something that was not a sudden leaping off … when he began school here … So it was a natural progression of what had been done before … We just continued what had been done before and expanded upon it.

<u>The student learns academic content.</u>

The student's parents want inclusion for socialization, but they have experienced that their son can learn content in academic classes:

> We just had the IEP (meeting, freshman year) and they, the first thing they said is, "[His] program is for socialization." They cannot understand that, yes, [he] is learning, too, in those classes. So we have the philosophy of [saying] "You're doing this for socialization reasons. We want him with his peers. We want him to be a part of their activities."—that kind of thing. We, underneath, think he learns way more [than he would in a self-contained special education class].

Choosing the general education teachers.

The process of choosing the student's teachers depends on experience and willingness. The choice of subjects and teachers is strongly influenced by the general education teachers' previous experience instructing children with disabilities and their perceived willingness to do so. The special educator describes the process:

> His classes were chosen during the spring [before freshman year] by the ex-vice principal and the special educator. And he had the hand-selected schedule, because he was going into academics. We looked at the people that were mostly trained for adaptations … For instance with band—you have one band teacher, [you] go with that band teacher. And Math Skills. There's one Math Skills teacher. But as far as American Studies we looked at the person that had had training or had been more open to working with students with more support needs.

The parents' involvement begins after the initial selection process by the special educator and the vice principal in charge of special education takes place. They describe the freshman year IEP process:

> We kind of went through and tried to—we decided no science because she wasn't sure she [the special educator] could find a teacher that would be real open to having him. So we thought, "Okay, let's not start off on the wrong foot." So we didn't pick science. But we did know we could get a good American Studies teacher and a good English teacher. So we kind of picked that way.

In nonacademic courses the student with disabilities was scheduled into classes that were an extension of his junior high school program. The Choir instructor reports: "I think he was in choir in junior high as well, and I know he was in band."

Viewpoints about the IEP differ

The special educator gives her view of the student's freshman IEP:

> And at first I think it was …thought of as socialization. But I think there were some confused goals … by maybe his mom wanting it to be academic. I think it was hard for maybe even her to … sort out socialization-academic. So I think at junior high it was sort of a little more

> academic, but academics are really different at junior high. So by the freshman year [in high school] I think that particular scheduling [his freshman year IEP] was way too academic.

Then the special educator describes how the IEP team developed his program for sophomore year:

> Well, basically his Mom, Dad and the team sat down and made a decision which courses would suit [him] best. He loves band, so obviously he's in band. He loves chorus, obviously he's in chorus. And then we looked at some of the more academic courses, like for instance math skills. He did take it last year, but we thought, "Well, a repeat of that wouldn't hurt." And that, that may help with obtaining math skills for just awareness. So that's basically how we went about selecting courses. And also looking at what the peers were involved in. For instance, he's taking a psychology class. His peers [other sophomores] are in that class.

Even though, for a student with disabilities, his or her school program is legally driven by what is written in the IEP, this student's parents do not see the IEP as particularly relevant:

> They're working on his IEP [for sophomore year] right now. I would say [that in my personal view] the IEP is pretty minimal in his programming. I kind of let it slide by and [let them write it] how they want to write it … I think we're gonna end up seeing a lot of functional skill stuff on this IEP. Because that's how special ed people think. And so they're gonna put that stuff on there. Like, they still want to work on—it just blows my mind—I think we'll see reading, writing, and functional math on his IEP … So, I just kind of let it go. I really watch more carefully the accommodations and that kind of section to make sure I've got what I want there. And whatever she [the special education teacher] wants to write for goals is fine.

The first year, AEA consultant sees it this way:

> I think IEP meetings were called together when communication started to break down or felt like it was breaking down and we would come back together … and say, "Okay, here's how we need to play on this."

General education teachers as part of the IEP process.

The general education teachers do not seem to understand the IEP process or their part in it. The law (IDEA, 1997) states that at least one general education teacher must attend an IEP meeting for any student included in general education classes. None of the general education teachers whom I interviewed were able to say with certainty that they had been at an IEP meeting for this student, although they all knew that the meetings occurred. Some of them provided written comments when they could not attend. The response of the Behavioral Science teacher was typical:

> We basically get informed of when [the IEP meetings are] are and if we can make it we, we try to do that. So I've got three on the docket for this month, which I don't have any clue at this point if I can make 'em or not. It just depends on how things are going that day. But I always give input. Generally I'll e-mail.

During the student's freshman year the Band instructor was probably at the IEP meeting but he was not sure: "I guess I don't know the terminology, but I've been at those big meetings where all of his teachers get together and sit around the table and [discuss his school program]." For the sophomore year it seems clear that the Band instructor was at the IEP meeting: "There was just a little stress when we were going through the [IEP]. We discussed whether he should move to symphony band or should he stay in concert band."

General education teachers adapt curriculum.

An important aspect of the process of including this student in general education classes was the effort of the general education teachers to adapt and modify their courses so that he could experience the maximum amount of participation. The Band instructor provided an in-depth description of his efforts:

> Somebody came with him to everything. And somebody walked him through every step of the way. And he needed that. And that was important … Everything was successful. He went to band contests and went on the band trip. And it was good. Just like any other kid, there's certain things he can do and certain things he can't do. He's not a distraction. I mean there's times—just about any kid in the band you can catch 'em goofing off at some time. Or any kid can be a distraction. Occasionally [this included student will] be a distraction, but not more so than, than any other teenager … He brings a certain flavor to the band but … I wouldn't say he impacts it greatly either way. So he's just a kid in there.

The Band instructor goes on to describe specific strategies he used:

> Well, I think things that worked were the team concept … as a liaison with the parents, with the aides, and with me. We're gonna play this piece of music. How could we work together to help [him] perform on this piece of music … Last year the aide gave me some suggestions: "Well, in junior high Mr. so-and-so rewrote the parts." "Oh, I never thought about that …"Why don't we try." And somebody said, "Well, why don't we make a tape of the song." And then having somebody else show [him] how the parts go, making the tape, letting him take the tape with the aide, or take the tape home and practice the parts. Anything … where he gets to hear something and then can go practice—guided practice with an aide and then practice it alone. So those types of things worked really well.

The second-year AEA consultant discusses how the band instructor helped the student become successful in the freshman year concert band:

> The band instructors re-wrote parts for [him] so he has his own parts in percussion. And certainly part of this is modeling people on sides of him, I'm sure … I don't think he would have a role in the entire piece or that type of thing, but, but he's given parts and cued by [the paraeducator].

The Behavioral Science teacher describes a modification used for the student and has high praise for the paraeducator:

> After she'd [the paraeducator] been through [that] whole [portion of the] class she knew what the main points were and she'd write a True/False thing, or whatever, and then she'd go through it with him. And he'd mark the answers and I'd correct it and write "Good job" or whatever. But even though the academics weren't what was being stressed, we still felt it was important for him to go through and be part of the class. The class is taking a test, [he]'s taking a test. His test wasn't the same test but some of the things were important—I mean they're the same in importance. And it

> worked out really well. It worked out terrifically. Of course we have to try a little trial and error to figure that out, but it didn't take too long before we figured out that "That's not gonna work, we need to do it this way" … He didn't want to be made … to feel different. And yet there's no way he's gonna take a 78-point matching test with 10 essays. He's not gonna do that. And he could understand that. It was a little hard at first, but once he understood that and that his test was gonna get attention from me just like their tests, he was fine.

The parents also worked closely with the English teacher to adapt materials and assignments:

> When we read *To Kill a Mockingbird* … [he] listened to it on tape. But what I did with [him]—we had packets, the students had packets that have questions they were supposed to answer. And with [him] I have these—what are called graphic organizers. While the kids were reading different questions, he would have a different graphic organizer … They're much more visual. They're much more concise. And, and he did a really nice job.
>
> [He] did a writing log. The kids … write a writing log, a page a day. And … he kept up with his … I don't think he wrote … the 60 pages per tri that the other kids did. But he would write, and we would give him topics. His writing logs he did in class and he did those hand-written …He can write, but it, it would look … like a kindergarten to third grade writing. You know, very big writing. It's slanted very few words per page. Because sometimes in class I would say, "Okay, I want you to write about this," or I'd show him a picture and say, "Just write about this person in your writing log."
>
> When we read *Mockingbird* also we did projects to go with it and I remember his project was he interviewed his grandmother. And he had videotaped his so that … the presentation was done at home … And people were helping him which was fine, that was great. And then he prepared a little intro that he had on cards, and he had it written out. And he … stood up in front of his classmates and read through the cards … And he loved that. He loved presenting. He loved being up in front of his peers. And in times like that they were very generous with, you know, giving him praise and letting him know that he had done a really nice job…
>
> [For *Romeo and Juliet* he watched the video instead of reading.] And then there was the Greek mythology. My student teacher actually did the mythology unit with the Odyssey. My guess was most of the things like the short stories and the shorter works I think were read to him at home. That's what I assumed was going on. Because it was obvious that

> he knew the stories. When we did a short story unit he knew what had gone on. Like what I mentioned earlier, he was able to answer all of the questions. They were probably recall questions about the story or, you know, trying to get at what was going on in the story.

The American Studies teacher had concerns about the process of including [this student] in her course:

> [He] started off the year great in my classroom. He was able to be in groups and do the kind of the mixer activities. As the year went on and the contents got more theoretical it became harder for him and … I saw less involvement. I think … he was getting more and more frustrated as the year went on and we moved into ground that he had no way of comprehending. And his social strengths really couldn't come into play, because when you're discussing intellectual ideas he can't really enter that discussion because he didn't understand the concepts being taught. So I wondered what would happen to him as he moved through high school to the more complex classes.

The student with disabilities had no problem fitting into a beginning level math class. While this class is considered a general education class, it clearly was designed to accommodate students with limited math skills.

> In my class he fits in just perfectly. He does all the same work. Of course he's got a one-on-one associate [paraeducator] helping him. He often works with other students in the class, especially … particularly one or two students … He comes up to the board and does problems. He does everything that everybody else does. So he's fully included in that class. It's the lowest level math class that we have here. And it's basic math skills. We've done addition, multiplication, work with fractions. Right now we're doing the metric system and then customary measurements. We're doing conversion type things—a little bit of geometry. We've done some very simple equations, some story problems [percentages]. Almost everybody in the class [has an IEP]. It's a very small class.

The student is included in courses in the Family and Consumer Science department in three of six trimesters. Previously he took Child Development and Foods I. Currently he is attending Foods I for the second time. He has a positive attitude and wants to be fully involved, but the use of equipment can present a problem: "He just really wants to get right in there and go to work. He's ready to

take on any challenge. [But] sometimes there's something that you'd rather he didn't do because it can be dangerous for him." Accommodations for his physical disability need to be made and that is covered by the paraeducator: "The associate, sort of takes care of that. I don't [because] I have 28 students in his class. So, that's just something she takes care of for me. And she also helps him, of course, with the written work and so forth." He works together with four other students in a group: "And they seem to integrate him pretty well." The paraeducator also goes over any written material with him: "And so then I give copies of those completed sheets to the associate so they can work with them and talk about the information."

The Foods instructor has adapted the quizzes for her students with disabilities:

> I generally make them shorter, bigger print, three foils instead of four, simpler questions, and so forth. The associates [paraeducators] generally take them in the other room 'cause they generally need to read 'em aloud to 'em … There's no stigma to having to go someplace to take your quiz, because everybody is going somewhere it seems.

The AEA consultant, year two, effectively sums up the process of inclusion: "And I think that's one of the … downsides of this effort to include … It requires a tremendous amount of effort and input on both the school's part and the parents' part to really pull this off."

<u>*Oklahoma* is a highlight of the student's inclusion</u>

One of the high points of the student's inclusion in high school was participation in the musical *Oklahoma* during his sophomore year. The Drama teacher offers this description of the student's involvement:

> The second I gave him a particular cue to listen to, the more specific I got with [him], the more confident he felt on the stage and the more energy he brought to the stage … His energy on the stage during the entire

> performance, during the entire rehearsal process was wonderful … His focus was much better than many of my other students on the stage because he really, really loved being there. And did anything and everything I asked him to do. [He]'s the type of student that is gracious as well. And he would thank me for rehearsals; thank me for spending time with him. And I don't get that a lot. And so he's the type of student that I adore and would love to see in future productions. 'Cause he's truly appreciative.

This student auditioned for a role in *Oklahoma* because of the initiative of paraeducator #3:

> Actually his associate came to me and told me about [him]. I had seen [him] but I didn't know his name … She came in to me and said, "You know, I think this would be a good experience for him. And he's in chorus and loves it. It's … one of his favorite classes. And his parents mentioned that maybe this might be something he would want to do." So then I approached [him] the next day in chorus and asked him if he was interested in auditioning for the musical.

The Drama teacher made adaptations to the audition process, shortening his lines and allowing him to practice with his paraeducator before he auditioned. It was important to the Drama teacher to have the student participate in the audition process: "I wanted him to experience the reading process and not say, 'Okay, you don't have to do it.' I wanted him to feel as though he was really part of the entire process." The Drama teacher also adapted choreography for the dance sequence: "I wanted [him] to be able to keep the beat and get the major movements, whether it is stage right, stage left, upstage, downstage. Not so much the detailed, perfect foot taps … And he could do it. That's another one of his strengths." The Drama teacher also felt that having this student in the chorus allowed him to have role models for his part in the production: "He was a cowboy. And he had five other boys who were doing the same thing that he was doing. And he could really follow them."

One mishap occurred during the rehearsals. As the day of performance

approached, the cover was removed from the orchestra pit. Because of the student's lack of peripheral vision on one side, he walked into the open pit—a drop of about three feet. He was unhurt, and his parents took the experience in stride. However the Drama teacher was concerned: "I dealt with the safety issue with the entire cast. We problem-solved, and one of the students volunteered and said, 'I will always walk … on this side of the stage with him.'"

The Drama teacher went on to describe how fortunate she felt to be able to offer this experience to the student:

> The [Choir instructor] and I also agreed that we felt strongly that [we wanted him] to have this experience. And it was entirely different from any other experience that he's had. I have felt the applause, you know, from an audience, a tremendous applause from an audience, and I don't think [he] has had that experience. [We were able to include him] because of the large chorus that really lended [*sic*] itself to extra students … [He] would not be able to do a primary role.

She also stated that he attended rehearsals and performances on his own with the help of the other cast members: "[His] assistant didn't stay for rehearsals … We had [him] and there was no supervision—other supervision—there with him other than ourselves. And that was how it was for the majority of time throughout the performance." The student experiences some of his most intense socialization because he is included in the after-play activities of the cast members. The mother describes an experience that every parent can identify with on some level:

> The kids were absolutely wonderful to him. He was so a part of that group. He loved the practices. They had … cast parties every night. And he had somebody who would take him to the cast party and [the paraeducator] would tell us who it was. And the first night he went out to the cast party, and they'd said they were going to [a local restaurant], and the notebook said he'd be back about 12:30 … So I'm waiting up. It's one o'clock, there's no [boy]. It's 1:30 there's no [boy]. And I'm just like, "Oh no. Do you think they forgot to bring him home?" I mean I am going nuts. This is the first time … he's ever, ever in his life been at a social event without a family member [or caregiver] … So then it's a quarter to two and

> … I just thought, "If he is not here by 2:00 a.m. I'm getting [his father] up and we are gonna go find him." And he showed up a little before two and [another student in *Oklahoma*] comes up, "Sorry, Mrs. [surname], we were at so-and-so's house after we got done at the [restaurant]. We were busy playing [cards] and I lost track of time." I wasn't mad at either one of 'em. I was just so glad that they didn't think, "Okay, we're gonna take [him] home and then we'll go to this party." They just took him right along, and he did it. The next night, same deal … So he had a delightful time. And the kids were, are just incredible with him. Just incredible. Just so supportive.

Research Question Two

Do the accounts of parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process?

<u>Check your facts, please</u>

Without talking to the Drama teacher, the special educator made a series of assumptions about the student's selection for a part in *Oklahoma*:

> The drama coach basically created a part for him in the chorus. And interestingly enough, there were four or five kids in the general ed that came to the associate [and complained about his inclusion]. She [the associate] said she didn't know what to do. And I said, "Well … I'll just take care of it. I'll go to the guidance counselors, and they can talk to those kids." [Because] there were kids that were distraught over [his]'s making it. Well, they couldn't get in because of [his]'s part. They couldn't get into the chorus because the chorus had been filled. And they felt that that was discriminating against them. Well, she [the drama coach] could [only] take so many kids in the chorus. So, she let [him] be part of the play.

When asked, "Was the student with disabilities actually displacing another student?" The special educator answered, "Yes, he was. There was one student that was so distraught, she was just weeping about it. She said, 'This is something I've always wanted to do. I have the skill he does not have.'" The Drama teacher talks about how he was chosen and addresses the issue of "fairness." She answers the question: Was anyone more capable

than the student with disabilities excluded from participation in the musical because he was included?

> And the benefit for [him] was he was a boy. If [he] were a girl, and I wanted to be fair … I don't know if I would have been able to be as flexible without hurting about … 20 girls' feelings. And [he] was able to be one of the primary chorus men because we needed boys to balance all these amounts of girls that we had. Every male who auditioned made it.

Band instructor and parents are at cross-purposes

At the IEP planning meeting for the student's sophomore year an issue arose that caused significant tension between all of the other members of the IEP team and his parents. The AEA consultant remembers:

> [At] that particular meeting that [the] parents were wanting him to go on to a more sophisticated band. And I think it was like jazz band or something. And it was one that you got in by audition. And … only certain students were allowed in. And there was a point in the meeting that was very tense … [The parents'] rationale for wanting it was that his classmates were going to be moving into that band [sophomore level symphony] and he wasn't, and he had social relationships with these classmates, so it would make sense for him to go on. The school's perspective was that we require auditions for all students. If we just wipe away all requirements for [one student], put him in, we're going to have a lot of angry kids. And that's not going to be in the overall benefit of [your son], you know. So it was kind of a tug and a pull, and I think that the band department also pointed out that not all of his classmates were going to be going to that band.

His parents want their son to continue on in band, progressing through each level, freshman to sophomore, and so on. For them, who the particular students are who will be in band with their son is the crucial question:

> And so we were talking then about the importance of him moving up with his peers in the different bands. So there's concert band for freshman, symphony band you try out for, and wind ensemble. And he's a sophomore now. So he's been in the freshman band, the concert band, two years. We wanted him to move up and be with his sophomore peers who are mostly in symphony and wind ensemble now.

The parents express discouragement and frustration by the lack of support

for their vision of inclusion during this time of disagreement:

> Oh, you should have heard the counselor's attitude, the assistant principal's attitude. It wasn't just the band people. All [AEA consultant year two] could say in that meeting was, "Is this inclusion the best for [your son] or would he be better off learning life skills?" And I wanted to slap him. And here's [AEA consultant year one], who was on the head of the inclusion resource team, sitting at the end of the table listening to all this yap about peers and didn't say one darn word. Not one word about what it means to be included with kids. I mean, that's what the whole inclusion resource team is about. She headed the team but did not say one word in that whole meeting. As they were screaming at us, accusing us, she didn't say a single word.

The parents are alarmed by what they perceive as unprofessional behavior on the part of the members of the IEP team:

> It was amazing. [The Band instructor] was pounding on the wall with his fists. Oh, they all were—cut us off—we couldn't finish a phrase. [The school counselor], what was her word? She said, "You are so disrespectful!" because we were disagreeing with [them] and trying to give a different viewpoint. "You are so disrespectful." Oh, it was, it was amazing.

A lack consensus building and mutual respect brought the parents to a sad conclusion: "I think we also learned we will never go to a meeting without a third party or a tape player, because if we have a tape player or if we have a third party, they probably won't behave in that manner." The IEP team felt that it would not be fair for the student to move up to the symphony band in his sophomore year because all of the students in that band must successfully complete the audition process: "He can't play at the same level as the other kids." "But we've always known that," the parents responded. "So what's the big deal?" But the IEP team, in support of the band instructor, continued to emphasize the need to audition for the symphony band: "But it's not fair if he got in the sophomore—symphony—band and somebody else didn't who had the skills." The parents are unhappy and disappointed about this decision:

> So that wouldn't be fair. So that was the whole rationale. And so we kept saying, "So you're telling us the only way he would ever get out of concert band is to be able to do this audition without any accommodations, just like a two-handed drummer?" And the answer was, "Yes." And so he's pretty much stuck in the concert band for four years. So he'll be a senior at age 19 with 14-year-olds that he doesn't even know.

For the parents the solution is simple: "Just do what you would normally do …Give him the triangle part."

During their son's sophomore year, their vision comes true, sort of:

> So then his cousin Brad, who is a junior, is a drummer. And Brad is in the symphony band ... So out comes Brad; he's obviously had to do this two-handed audition. He plays in one song, and he plays triangle. Now [our son] was in the concert band, he played in one song. He played the triangle. Now he could have played the part Brad played just as well. The problem is he can't get past the test.

The parents understand that not only is their son's physical limitation an issue but that the band instructors must cope with too many student drummers: "[They've] got too many drummers, so a lot of kids only get to play in one song. So we get that. We saw that with Brad. Brad played the four notes on a triangle, and that's all he did for the whole concert."

The band instructor and the parents seem to have different priorities:

> But I [the mother] think [our son] would be happier playing four notes on a triangle with his buddies in symphony band than playing in the three songs which they let him play in [concert band performance]. They put him in three of the four songs. So he had more parts than a lot of the drummers did. You know, trying to appease these upset parents. And that was nice that he got to play in three songs. I don't have any problem with that. But I still think if you were trying to weigh the pros and cons—the symphony band—one triangle piece with your buddies every day in all those practices would mean more to him than playing with kids that aren't his buddies. And [our son reports that] he has to go to band and nobody talks to him and they ignore him every day.

Along with what appear to be different priorities for the student's inclusion in band, socialization versus performance, there also appears to be a lack of communication

between home and school around this incident:

> At the end of the [IEP] meeting in January they said that they would allow [our son] to try out. So I've been asking and asking: "Have you tried out for symphony band yet? Have you tried out for symphony band yet? Have you tried out for symphony band yet?" "No, no. no, no, no." He's brought the music home. I can show it to you. It's way beyond him. So we don't even, I mean, we try to pick out things maybe he could do, but it's, the three—two-thirds of it is two-hand rolls, all the different rolls that you do on drums. Well, that whole part of the test he can't do. And so I finally wrote a note and said, "When is he going to try out?" And the note came back, "He tried out in the end of January." So then I—that was from the [special educator] and [she said] that he'd be in the concert band. So then I wrote [band instructor] and I said, I asked [our son] and [he] said, "No, I didn't try out." So I wrote [the band instructor] and I said, "Is [our son]—did [he] try out?" And he said, Yeah, he did. He didn't have [he] do the audition like everybody else. He didn't set up an audition time. He just told [he] that they would do it over several lessons. So [our son] must not have understood that; he thought he was doing lessons.

The parents report that the band instructor does make an accommodation for their son: "Whereas at the meeting they were saying, 'He has to do it just like everybody else,' they made the adaptations, but they still determined that concert band was the best musical placement for him." The parents report that breakdowns in communication between band instructors, special educator, and parents continue to occur:

> And then in the second part of the e-mail I had also written to [the special educator] and said "I think we missed state contest again, next year." We just don't know when the timelines are. But then I saw on the calendar it's coming up. So I said, "Well, next year we want to get him into state contest." So it [the e-mail, which band instructor #2 (not interviewed) wrote] says: "I assigned [your son] a part for state ensemble contest, and we were to practice tonight and [he] said he didn't want to." So then I asked [our son] and he said that's right—he told 'em he didn't want to, 'cause he didn't want to try out. So here again we have this communication problem. [Our son] thought he had to try out. [Band instructor #2] had given him a part. So [our son] says "No" 'cause he doesn't want to go through the rejection again, hereas he already had a part. So now I had to go back to 'em and say, "Okay, we had this misunderstanding."

The band instructor offers his explanation for his decision to keep the student in the concert band:

> What's best for [him]? He's in a band now [his sophomore year] that is mostly freshman …There's three bands. The freshman, or the concert band, is for kids

> that aren't quite ready for the other two bands. As kids get some skills they audition into the second band—symphony band is what we call it … As they become really skilled then they go into the top band, which is the wind ensemble. And there are certain things—musical skills—that you have to acquire to go into each band. The wind ensemble is very, very difficult—very high level. Symphony band is kind of middle-ish. And the concert band is an introductory kind of thing. And in the concert band I think there is like maybe two juniors and about half a dozen sophomores and the rest freshman. The symphony band there's a few more seniors, a lot of sophomores, and some juniors. The wind ensemble is primarily seniors, juniors, and a few sophomores. No, no freshman there.

He shares some concerns he has regarding the student's participation in symphony band that it appears his parents did not know. The band instructor explains that due to the student's skill levels, adaptations for the more sophisticated music become harder to make:

> The higher you move up, the further away you get from meaningful adaptations. Or the further away you get from your skill levels … There are things in the concert band that we haven't had to make adaptations for, that are at his skill level … Symphony band is up another level, and the music becomes more complex. The more difficult the music, the harder it is to simplify—you know, to make adaptations.

A second concern that the band instructor has is that the student might make an error during a performance:

> [In]a concert band situation, any kid—let alone [this one]—could bop at the wrong time and it's not gonna ruin [the performance] … It's not a perfect performance at the concert band …There's no stress as far as—okay, if he booms one at the wrong, it's not gonna ruin the [piece], because it's not perfect anyway. Now the symphony band gets a little more refined and … things have to be lined up or somebody's gonna stick out. And kids … they don't want someone to come in there and do something that's gonna mess up the piece. So you run into that.

The band instructor admits that [the student's] freshman peers, the ones who know him from junior high, are not in concert band with him in sophomore year:

> Well, the kids that [he] came in with last year by and large have moved into the symphony band and the wind ensemble. And so, you know, we had a big deal [with the parents] earlier in the year … Does [he] move up? … Some of the kids that he was in band [with in] fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth [grades] … have known him for several years and are maybe a little more open to conversation

> [with him]. … The parents thought, "Well, if we move him up into that symphony band he'll be with more of his peers." Well, a lot of those kids that they call his peers, his friends out of that bunch, a lot of them are already up in the wind ensemble.

And he adds: "So we're not moving him up just for socialization purposes." But he will be moved up when he has earned the move. Contrary to what the parents understood from the IEP meeting, it is unlikely that their son will remain in concert band for all four years of high school. The Band instructor explains the process:

> When they're seniors, if they've been … if somebody is a good band kid, and they're trying and, and they've been in that concert band three years … as seniors we move 'em into the symphony band. So I would assume …we would [do that for him as well].

The Band instructor also emphasizes that he felt that everyone except the parents was behind the band department's decision to keep their son in the freshman concert band:

> There wasn't any problem … for the school or the AEA … Everybody was 100 percent. And we were trying … I still think that is what's best for him … There are times when he plays things that are not adaptations, and to me it should be a much more meaningful experience for him to play. He's really playing what's there. And playing it right. Rather than move him up another notch … to where it's over his head, and what he's playing really has nothing to do with the real song.

It seems clear that, while the parents see their child's involvement in band activities as an important opportunity for socialization, the band instructors see his musical performance, however limited, as paramount.

<u>Views regarding "meaningful instruction" differ</u>

The AEA consultant, year two, has concerns about the validity of [the student's] program:

> If I were [him], and if I were going to a classroom every day, and the only thing that was significant in there for me to do was to socialize, I'd get—I'd kinda

> wonder, "What is this all about?" In other words, I think every learner deserves to be getting new information.

The parents are impressed by the level of understanding and enthusiasm exhibited by the general education teachers who have had their son in class: If you go to the parent-teacher conferences with those regular ed teachers every one of 'em says, "We now understand why you want him in here, the importance for his learning, the importance for the other kids' learning, and the importance for our learning." There wasn't a single one who said, "[He] does not contribute." They all said, "His contributions—the kids respect his contributions. We see what he's learning. It's different than what the other kids are learning, but he is learning. And the benefits to all of us as a classroom community [are] enriched by him being there." And that's what all those regular ed teachers say. There isn't a single one that says, "I don't get why you're doing this."

In contrast to the general education teachers' enthusiasm, the parents report a lack of support and understanding from the special education personnel:

> But if you talk to [AEA consultant, year two], he says, "I don't get it, but okay, you've made that choice." And you talk to [the assistant principal], and you talk to the counselor and you even talk to [LRE facilitator/special educator] and I think they all think we're nuts. The special ed people can't get their heads around it.

Why not now?

The parents resisted the school's efforts to provide vocational/life skills training during school hours. Both the AEA consultant and the LRE resource person/special educator want the student to leave high school during the school day and participate in job training and improve his life skills. The parents do not see this approach as necessary or desirable.

This is the viewpoint of the sophomore year AEA consultant:

> More the vocational. And some of those—what I consider life skills things—that, that he's really not getting, in my opinion, right now. And I guess my question back to her [the mother] was, "But does it need to be either/or? Does it need to be socialization now, vocational later? Or, can we make a nice blend of those?"

But the parents see his high school years as his only opportunity to learn the social skills he will need after high school. They are not concerned about vocational training, because they are confident that this can be achieved within their community without sacrificing his inclusive high school experience:

> And so now [preparing for sophomore year] the push is vocational. Can he leave [the high school] for two periods a day? Can he go do this? Do what they want? He's not gonna leave [high school] for two periods a day …. We think we understand [our son] and special ed, too, well enough that it's not time for that. He's not ready for that. He would lose something by leaving. He's got a whole life. He's got from 18 till 80 to do that. This is the only opportunity he'll ever have [to be] in such a concentrated social opportunity. But … you'll see "explore vocational" all over his IEP, too. But we won't do it—I mean as far as signing him out of [high school] …
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> We have contacts, you know. His former [paraeducator's] husband runs a [supermarket] and this [supermarket] would be interested in having him. And we wouldn't have a problem having him, you know, work with somebody. But not on the time line of … the 8:00 to 3:00 o'clock stuff that they want to pull him out [from] …. We're not ignoring [the vocational]. We're evaluating and assessing. Plus, in special ed you can go to school until your 21. So we'll work on that between 18 and 21, when his peers are gone to college and he won't be going there. And we are not going to lose these next three precious years when he's got that opportunity to be with peers and learn the skills that he's gonna need when he does get into the community—the social skills, the communication skills, the peer savvy sort of thing that he needs to have. So we've got plenty of time.
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> And we'll have to see what community services can help. There are those available. So we'll probably continue to work on those things as a family just like we do with our other boys. We kind of view his education program similar to [their other two sons]. And we wouldn't want [their other two sons] working on checkbooks and how to purchase things at the store between 8:00 and 3:00. And we do that with them in evenings, and we'll do that with [this son].... What's our big hurry either? Why do we have to work on all this stuff when this is their big opportunity to be with peers? We've got the rest of their life to work on that.

> Because once they get out of high school they'll never have the wealth of opportunities within a group of friends that they have [in high school].

The special educator acknowledges that the parents have realistic vocational goals for their son but does not understand why those goals cannot begin to be implemented during high school:

> You talk about transition, and I think at that point you think about what's realistic. And I think that—I have the feeling that mom is realistic. You know, one thing she's talked about quite frequently is the [supermarket] … He's on an IEP completion program. He's not on a regular high school diploma. So I think there's a lot of realistic vocational goals there … The vision statement is that he become independent and a contributor to society. And I think he will do that with support.
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> A vocational education specialist came in and he gave [the student] a living skills test. And … the scores weren't great. And he felt that … [vocational education] might benefit [this student]. But [his mother] does not want to have any vocational ed at this time. She wants to wait until he's 18 … However, I brought up the fact that many of his peers will be working at [the supermarket] next year. And … wouldn't it be a wonderful opportunity for [your son] to maybe have some vocational person oversee him while he's working for two hours, maybe three days a week at [the supermarket]. Why not now? And then he's really meshed in more with his peers. And that was not considered a great idea. Is the instruction meaningful? And let's look at the vision. Let's get back to the vision on the IEP. If the vision is socialization, are we meeting that vision?

<u>Good communication is essential.</u>

The special education teacher designed a notebook that went back and forth with the student. The information in the notebook was provided primarily by the paraeducator. The AEA consultant, year one, describes home-school communication:

> There was certainly a lot of communication through the daily log, through telephone calls. I think IEP meetings were called together when communication started to break down—or felt like it was breaking down—and we would come back together … if the family didn't feel like the associate was communicating well with them in the book or behavior issues were coming up.

The AEA consultant, year two, regards the notebook as contributing to communication problems rather than solving them:

> [Because of] this attempt to communicate in a notebook … there were

> misunderstandings and kind of demands and counter-demands and things that kind of got people riled up. I think another perception that the school had—[the paraeducator] had—was that often times they were being asked to be very, very accountable, to put every detail into this book, but that there were—and, and I actually saw evidence of this by looking through the book—that there were times where a question would be asked of the parents and they didn't answer. Or, something like … "Could you please provide this?" and nothing came. And so I think there was a lot of tension over this notebook … Homework was the basis of this notebook to begin with, but it became much broader than that.

For sophomore year the special education teacher makes an adjustment to the notebook format:

> The format has been changed to this assignment book format. So there's no narrative. See last year [the paraeducator] would write a narrative. "He slept this many times. He hit me for waking him up." And so [the paraeducator] would just write out [everything that happened]. And so there was way too much negative.

The parents do not express displeasure with the notebook communication and supplement that format with other methods:

> We have a notebook that goes home back and forth every day. And it's an assignment notebook. So it just lists out the assignments and then there's a little place at the bottom for comments and then kind of a margin where I can write comments, too. And then we know exactly what's coming up. So I have daily communication with the school. If it's bigger issues—not that day-to-day stuff—then we call [the special education teacher] and then she sorts it out for us and gets back to us. I also e-mailed the general ed teachers directly if I have a question. But if it's a special ed issue—paperwork issue or something—we go through [the special educator].

Still, during year two, communication becomes tenser:

> We are to contact [special education teacher] if we have a concern or problem. So I usually e-mail her because she—it's hard to reach her by phone and it's impossible to reach me by phone. So I think the e-mail works the best. This year we're doing more direct e-mails to the teachers. And then if—usually when I e-mail [special education teacher] with a concern [the assistant principal] calls. I think she goes straight to him, and he becomes the voice. She rarely—she does call occasionally. In fact, I think she's only called twice since January [speaking during second interview in late April]. The rest of the time it's always been [the assistant principal]. When I sent that schedule [for junior year] back in with all that regular ed stuff [the assistant principal] called me and said, "You know, just want to talk to you about this schedule you sent in." It wasn't [the special

> educator]. So they kind of are using the administrator as the communicator since they see us as kind of ugly.

Again the AEA consultant, year two, describes what he perceives as the limitations of the notebook method of communication:

> I think it's a frustration point to be honest with you, on both sides. And what I've seen is that [the paraeducator] feels that she is just going to the nth degree to get information into this notebook. I mean in detail. And I think the parents sometimes are feeling like there's pieces that they want her to do—to go out and collect this information from the teachers and that type of thing.

At the end of the sophomore year the AEA consultant regrets the gradual disintegration of communication and trust that took place over the previous two years.

> But I would love to see the type of thing where we came to a meeting—we could all, you know, just be really honest. We could—you know, the hidden agendas are gone, the frustrations. I mean obviously we're all going to be—there's frustrations. That's all part of adult life and communication and stuff. But that at the end of that we all arrive at a decision that we all feel comfortable with and could support. I mean I know that there's times where parents walk away from those [meetings] just shaking their heads and saying, you know, "[The high school] is just—you have to fight for everything you want." And [the high school] is saying, "Wow, we gave them the world and they wanted more."

<u>The importance of the paraeducator.</u>

The area of consistent agreement among all the individuals central to the student's inclusion in general education classes in high school is the importance of the paraeducator. This individual is seen as pivotal in insuring his success. The AEA consultant, year two, has high praise for the current paraeducator:

> I had quite a bit of contact with the paraeducator. She is Wow! She is probably one of the best paraeducators that I have had contact with in my entire history of working with special education. I didn't know her background at first, and I was just kind of blown over by her, her knowledge and ability … She has just an incredible amount of good common sense and good social skills that just do wonders in terms of working with the teachers, working with parents, working with [the student]. And just extremely faithful to what demands are put on her. If she's asked to do something, she does it. She goes beyond what the expectations are. So, you know, this is somebody who is a rare exception from what I have experienced … This person just stands heads above anybody I've seen. It's just

amazing.

The AEA consultant has concerns about how unprepared the paraeducators are for work in the general education classrooms:

> We all recognize … that we are asking these people to do an incredible job with very little training and with very little pay. Although [this] paraeducator is an exception to this. The vast majority of these people do not come in with a background in education [as does the paraeducator in question]. You know, we give 'em a 15-minute orientation of the building and throw 'em out in the classroom.

In the case of the present student, because his parents did not want him to spend any part of his day in a special education classroom, his paraeducator was not able to work directly under the supervision of a special educator. The AEA consultant sees that the results can be problematic:

> We have regular classroom teachers who are saying, "I have this person hanging around my classroom. I'm kind of uncomfortable having somebody in there." We have the paraeducator saying … "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do in there … I'm not comfortable with the teacher going up and asking if I should do this."

The AEA consultant comments that the general education teachers try to provide training for the paraeducators: "So obviously we have good [general education] teachers who then understand the problem, provide training as best as they can when they understand what the issues are." And the AEA consultant adds that the school system tries to offer training for paraeducators:

> The [Area Education Agency, the school district], and the [local community college] are places where these people are offered training. For the most part are [the paraeducators] willing to invest the time and the effort to get this training? Are they looking at this as a lifetime career? I would say for 90 percent of them the answer is "No."

The AEA consultant is concerned that the individual who has primary and ongoing contact with the student with severe disabilities is a paraeducator:

> Is it really appropriate to have an untrained person in this role? If we are really going to ask that these types of kids [children with severe disabilities] have their primary person knowing them and understanding them be a paraeducator, then we have got to really up the training, up the salaries. We've got to turn this into a profession, you know. And I know [the local community college] has done that. They have a whole … sequence of studies—I don't know if it's a year or two—where people can get into it … They're trained as paraeducators. So I think that we need to bring some respect and legitimize this as a profession. I think we have to take a look at paying these people a decent wage.

In addition the AEA consultant would like to see the paraeducator paid to attend in-service training and to attend IEP meetings:

> And then I think in terms of school districts, I don't believe these people are given much time in terms of in-service time that is built into their schedules. They're the people that would know in detail what's happening with the kids. And yet they sometimes aren't at the IEP conferences. And of course part of that is that the IEP conferences tend to take place after school … They're not being paid for that.

The AEA consultant wonders whether parents, who ask for a full-time paraeducator for their child, really understand what the outcomes can be:

> In terms of the paraeducators' role, I think we have a lot of work to do with parents, too, in this regard. And that is that kind of how this all occurred … We had kids who had very significant needs in the schools, and we got the idea that we needed a paraeducator attached to this kid … That's how we started. Well, the word kinda got out and all of a sudden now we've just got a lot of parents that are coming in [and saying] you send a person out and shadow this kid all day long. You follow him around. You know, it's like two old people attached at the hip. It is not pleasant for the kid having this person shadow them and follow them around. They feel singled out, stigmatized
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> .
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> And I think that in terms of parents, sometimes … they want this paraeducator attached to their kid, but I don't think they understand the full implications of what that does … I don't think we've done our homework in terms of educating them on what is the value of an inclusive education, and how can we make sure that, that paraeducator is there supporting that value … I'm involved in meetings all the time on this issue. And I sometimes really feel caught in that dilemma … I want to be honest with parents and say, "Look, you want your child to socialize. Is having an adult standing by your child going to promote socialization? Or is that going to make them … less of a social entity within that classroom?"

The American Studies teacher was aware of the paraeducator, year one, focusing

on the student's behavior, socialization, and academics:

> A lot of what the [paraeducator#1] did was dealt with some of his behaviors in the class … He had some behaviors that, that needed to be stopped … The [paraeducator] would help him to focus on the class and not do this other behavior … The [paraeducator] then would help him interact in groups. The [paraeducator] would sometimes read to him. And sometimes explain things to him. Often it wasn't during the class period, though. It was outside of my sight. It was under the guidance of his special ed teacher.

Freshman year did not go as smoothly as the sophomore year because the student's paraeducators were not as effective: The English teacher reflects on the interactions between the student and his paraeducators.

> He had [paraeducator #1] for the first half of the year and then [paraeducator #2] for the second half. The first half, I liked [paraeducator #1] as a person but … I didn't think [the student] liked him. I remember one day—[paraeducator #1] was gone, and I think [the student] was on his own … And he loved those days. That was I think his glory when he could do it on his own … I asked him how was your day and …I just heard him make a comment about it was the best day he had had.
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> And I had noticed that he was often times sort of—what's the word?—he wouldn't listen to [paraeducator #1]. Or he would get really sort of obstinate with him and defiant—very defiant. And [paraeducator #1] would get frustrated with him. And then he would say, "[He] won't do something," and I would just say [to the student] "Listen. You know, you need to do this because I've asked you to do it. It's for my class." And I said to him several times, "You need to listen to [paraeducator #1]." And I even sat down once with him and talked to him and I said, "Are you mad at [paraeducator #1]?" And he was. And I said, "Even if you're mad at him you have to do your work, because that's your responsibility."
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> And I—after a while I got a little concerned because it seemed that … [paraeducator #1] kind of got frustrated with him. And I think [the student] sensed that. And so [paraeducator #1] ended up leaving [before the end of] the freshman year ... And whatever it was about [paraeducator #1] that [the student] didn't like … I think [paraeducator #1] was doing what he thought he was supposed to be doing and was doing what he was told. Perhaps he didn't feel comfortable doing those things … [The student] had a lot of behaviors. [He] would scratch himself or touch himself, which they didn't want him doing those things. And they'd given [paraeducator#1] specific instructions of what to do. If he was falling asleep he was supposed to take the chair out and make him stand and … [paraeducator#1] didn't feel comfortable doing those things necessarily. And so … there was sort of a conflict I think.

> And I had mentioned it [the conflict] to [the special education teacher]. And she said she didn't want … to say anything to [the student] because, in case it wasn't [a conflict] there, they didn't want to … plant the seed for it. But then [paraeducator #2] came in, and he really seemed to like her, and she was really, I think, more of a caretaker with [the student]. And I think he liked that better, as opposed to sort of an authority. She was more—and he listened to her really well.

The Behavioral Science teacher shares her perceptions of the paraeducator during his sophomore year:

> I think [paraeducator #3] made the big difference, too, because she was willing to take a chance and, "Oh, let's try this." "Let's, let's do a modified test." "Let's try that." … I think she was what made it a wonderful experience for all of us, because she was kind of the liaison between [the special education teacher] and the parents and the [regular education teacher] and [the student]. And she knew when [he] was having a bad day. She'd say—and then we knew, [he] was having a bad day—"Let's kind of take it easy." And usually by the end of the period he was having a good day.

The Behavioral Science teacher wanted to be involved, to be in the loop, when the special education teacher and paraeducator discussed adaptations:

> I wish I would have had more lead time to sit down and say to [paraeducator#3], "Well, what's the deal here? What kind of things could we …" If we wouldn't have had to just kind of throw things together. And I know that [paraeducator#3] and [the special education teacher discussed the student and his educational needs]. And the parents. I'm sure that they all got together and did all these things. But as a general ed teacher it would be nice to let us in on it sometimes. Instead of just …"Hey, maybe we should, you know, do this." "Okay."
>
> I mean, I felt like a lot of it went really well because [paraeducator#3] was [paraeducator#3]. But if you would have had someone that wasn't as good as [paraeducator#3], wasn't as bright, wasn't as creative, it would not have been as good … It would have been a real struggle for me to have written that modified test. I wouldn't have had time … But [paraeducator#3] took care of that for me. She took care of the social things that helped [the student] to feel like he was a part of the group … And, [if she had not done so], more of the pressure would have been on the teacher to come up with those things …
> Now I know how good it could be. Now I know what a great experience is.

During freshman year the student attended his Choir class with his paraeducator:

> [The student and his paraeducator were in class together] nearly every day.

> There've been a few days he's been alone … [The paraeducators] have been very helpful … Sometimes [he] gets … a little too physically active and they'll go over and help him calm down. Or, if he dozes off and starts to … kind of bob, then they'll go over and gently shake him and wake him up and help him stay with us. And they run off music for him and enlarged it. He doesn't read music, and it really doesn't make any sense to him, but he can see it a little better when it's enlarged … [Paraeducator#3], his current associate, she comes with him to class, stays for a few minutes, and then she takes a break and actually leaves the classroom for a while. I think that's … maybe her break time.

During the two years that the student has been in choir:

> He had … a series of people. Nobody stayed with him too long. Well, I shouldn't say that. You know, like a trimester or so. But there were two or three different ones over the course of the [two] years. They've … all been fine. They've not been a distraction or a problem at all. They were very cooperative. And in fact they would even sometimes tell me—they'd say, you know, "The kid sitting in the other room, every time you turn your back is doing something at [the student]," or "looking at [him]," or doing something. So they … even kind of helped me monitor the other students' behavior. I was not disappointed that he had been in there … When my [class] list came out with [his] name on it, I didn't go, "Oh, no, not again." I was fine with having him back in there. I thought things had gone just fine.

The teacher for Family and Consumer Science describes her working relationship with the paraeducator:

> We have actually, you know, developed a way that we work together pretty well ... She'll listen with [the student] and we'll work things out together and if they get to something that she doesn't feel comfortable helping him with … she'll suggest "Maybe you should call [the teacher] over and get some help." And he'll raise his hand and call me over. And we'll kind of sift through it and work through it together.
>
> A recent quiz that we just took—she always tells me how much she helps him. Yeah, she's very good about that—and this most recent quiz that we just took she came in and said, "I had to give him a lot of prompts." So this was something that was not easy for him. It was converting Celsius to Fahrenheit and Fahrenheit to Celsius. And time—lots of stuff on time. How much time has passed between this time and something. Those things are hard for [him]. But there hasn't been … very many times when she had to say that to me. There's a lot of … prompting that's not really [the] interfering kind of prompting … Just little, kind of keeping him on track kind of prompting. Sort of, "Okay, so then what do we do next?" … She's not leading him at all, but just kind of keeping him thinking of the next step instead of letting his mind wander off to something else.

Paraeducator #1 describes his job:

> Actually as an associate in the classroom … my role was to help all the students in there … I was [this student's] primary associate. But then, when he was working okay or doing what he needed to, I could circulate and help other students in the classroom. I did that with band, too. I even played some musical instruments in band and stuff. You know, to fill in when kids were gone. I helped students. You know, I pointed out where we were at. I used to play percussion so I kind of know what was going on there … I felt like, if I could socialize a little with the other peers then … they'd get comfortable with me and so they would socialize with [my student] better, too.

He goes on to describe his interaction with the general education teachers: "Usually in class—maybe briefly after class—we'd discuss … assignments and what they expected. And that was … daily. They were all very nice."

The Band instructor knows that the purpose of this inclusion is socialization and wonders if the presence of the paraeducator is actually a hindrance:

> Any time … a normal high school kid [has] an adult hanging around right next to 'em … it's kind of gonna be a superficial conversation, you know … When his aide is gone … it's still gonna be kind of a limited, is my observation .... What do high school kids think about? What do they talk about? … It's something in the … movies. "What are you gonna do after school tonight?" … "Did you get your homework done?" "Did you watch the basketball game?" It's, kinda finding a common ground … for some meaningful dialogue there. I think the kids are open to "Hi [student's name], how are you?" … I think some kids that have had a little history with him are a little more open to the communication thing.

The parents believe that the general education teachers have accepted the student's presence in their classes with his paraeducator: "I would say for the most part he was well accepted in the inclusion … with the associate. Some teachers didn't get it … because that wasn't traditional … They were long-term teachers maybe, had been there a long time." The parents discuss the three paraeducators that their son has had: "Some are more in synch with [him] than others. But for the most part it's been pretty positive. And the one he has now [paraeducator #3] works well with him. And that's what I think

makes it click—is that he gets a good associate, because [their son's] not hard to get along with." When asked if the paraeducator is a key player, the parents respond: "Oh yeah. Very important." The parents describe one of their son's behaviors that became a serious issue during freshman year. During the freshman year he would frequently fall asleep during class and sometimes slip off of his chair. The special education teacher saw the behavior as conscious and willful. The parents resolved the problem by taking their son to a neurology clinic where the doctor diagnosed an "arousal disorder" and prescribed a medication which eliminated the problem:

> I think [paraeducator #2] tried hard. She didn't have a lot of support from [the special education teacher]. She was getting a [different] message from us. The poor thing was stuck in the middle. We were saying "Medical, medical, medical!" And [the special education teacher] was saying, "Behavior, behavior, behavior!" And the poor little associate was stuck in the middle. "Do I yank him out of class or do I let him sleep?" So she was a basket case, just like the rest of us by the end of the [freshman] year.

But the current paraeducator for sophomore year has been very successful: "She appreciates and adores working with him … So when you can get somebody that really works with and understands him … as the one at—in—the junior high did, then [our child] does much better. And he's got a good one now."

The parents go on to describe the variables that they believe led to the family's problems with the school during freshman year:

> Yeah, you can identify those variables. It was philosophy, a poor associate, medical problems, communication. That's four. Get all four of those going [wrong] and it was a disaster. [You had an associate] that was incompetent. We [the parents and the school] had differing philosophies. We had poor communication between home and school. And we had a kid who medically was very challenging. And you put those four together and it was a bad year.

But after resolving some of these issues the parents feel that the sophomore year is going very well:

> If we could just take last year out of the picture and look at how different this year has started, it's just amazing. Because we have them resigned to our philosophy, which is good. We've got great communication between home and school this year. We've got an excellent associate. And [our son is] stable. So you've got all four things working in the right direction.

The parents go on to reiterate the importance of the paraeducator:

> It has to work for [our son], and if the person doesn't match up well with [him] … then you get all these negative things … from the associate or from [the special education teacher]. Or then we wonder what [the special education teacher] is talking about and [the special education teacher] wonders what we're talking about. It's like having or not having a foreman on a job. If you don't have somebody to keep things straight, then the system kind of breaks down. So, so the associate really is a key …to make it work.

The parents have very little personal interaction with paraeducator#3:

> The associates are very protected from us, big bad parents. And so there's never direct communication with [paraeducator#3]. She does a great job of documenting what needs to be done at the end of the day. Her notes are always very positive, if she writes anything in the notebook. [Our son] I think works very well with her … As far as direct contact with her it's minimal. Very minimal.

The special education teacher describes her additional responsibilities as the LRE coordinator:

> I oversee the associate because that's part of the accommodation, or part of [the student's] program. Well, what happened last year is [that] one of the principals, who's now retired, put into place a .2 position [approximately one class period a day] called Least Restricted Environment position. Which mean t… one period would be devoted to overseeing associates, because other associates were hired, too.

The special education teacher describes the mechanics of the LRE position:

> Well, I met with the paraeducator associate. The person would come up on my prep period, and we'd sit down, we'd talk, we'd meet. I check the home/school communication notebook every day. I'd see what the person had written in it. … Before the job … would start what I'd do is I'd sit down and we'd go through the whole IEP, talked about confidentiality, the issues with that, the importance of that. We'd talk about behavior management. I mean it was a compact, let's say, in-service for an associate.

In addition the special educator has an opportunity to attend workshops with

paraeducator#2:

> I had gone to two workshops given by this woman from New York on training paraeducators. That was with [paraeducator #2]. I thought that the information was helpful. I think that there's never really enough time given to the training of associates, considering the support needs that they're providing for some of these students. I mean, it's tremendous. I mean I'm trained … I have a master's degree in education. These people are going to school or not going to school. They're making like $7.50 an hour … There's not a lot of kudos or whatever you want to say as far as … if they've done a good job or they're trying to do a good job. But there's not a lot of perks, let's put it that way.

The special educator is also concerned that in the minds of the parents, the distinction between the responsibilities and activities of the special educator and the paraeducator can become confused:

> And also sometimes I really think that parents view them [the paraeducators] on the same level as a professional. Which they are professionals, but they're not really responsible for some of the things that maybe a parent would think they're responsible for … Like for instance with home/school communication notebook, they might be asked to do something that's really not in their realm. Communication for instance … I don't believe you should be calling associates at home. Plus I'm the one that's the responsible [person]. You know it really comes down to me. Plus a lot of times the associate feels a lot of stress when a lot is asked from a parent. [Like] what happened in this class? … Putting [the paraeducator] on the spot.

The special educator describes some of the problems she had with Paraeducator#1:

> But he was really into behavior to the point of ridiculous. Like, [the student] blankety-blank-blank seven times during the lesson and tapped on the desk eight … Doing baselines like that … to the point of making, almost creating, behaviors … making it worse by focusing on it … I don't know if he didn't have the interest or skills. I don't know what it was, but [he] just didn't—wasn't—teachable

Then the special educator describes paraeducator#2 who supported the student for the second half of freshman year:

> [She was] more able to do the job. And she was more teachable. She had a more positive attitude. But she was extremely threatened by [the student's] mom because she [the mom] did call her at home. And [the paraeducateor] didn't want

> that. She didn't know how to tell her not to. She had a hard time separating herself.

Finally, the special educator describes paraeducator#3:

> She's just fabulous—I doubt she'll be returning. And I also think that [this student's] program—this is my general feeling—is as good as the associate. If you don't have a good associate with a full inclusion student, the full inclusion student is going to have a difficult time out there in general ed. And, even when you have a good associate, it's difficult because of the student's support needs. [The paraeducator looks at] how the students … respond to instruction. We look at the output and how [the studnet] participates. And he participates in a social situation pretty well. He'll raise his hand, he'll participate. And [paraeducator#3] will … steer him sometimes. And help him with that.

Again the special educator reiterates the importance, to a student and the student's family, of having the right person in the job of paraeducator:

> That's right. Somebody that's really invested. [A person with] no training—you're just lucky—[that really is interested and willing to do the job.] And has the skills. You can't just have a warm, friendly body. It has to be somebody who really understands how to write. There's a lot of skill involved in communicating to the parents. If you ever get caught in a parking lot with the parents, you have to be able to communicate. You have to be able to write, you have to be able to document … I think it's a big job—I do—for the people that go full time into classrooms like this. It's so intense.

And again, high praise for [paraeducator#3] from the special educator:

> She's a gem, because she has common sense … Before something happens she'll say, "Okay, now [*name*], we're gonna go to the cafeteria and you know what that means. That's the study hall that we're gonna start our homework. And I 'm gonna give you about five to ten minutes to get yourself started and then we're going to start. This is what I expect from you" … She's very common sense. And then she talks about consequences … When he's down in that setting and he's not doing it. "Now, the consequences of this, you realize, you're not gonna get your homework done. And think about how that's gonna make you feel. Do you feel better when you get your homework done?" … She's so skilled that way, so common sense, so patient. So, that's what makes his program work, too. She's skilled. She's very common sense. I can say that: Wise.

In this chapter I have presented what the parents and educators (e.g., administrators, general education teachers, special education staff, AEA consultants)

involved in one young man's inclusion in general education classes during freshman and sophomore years had to say about the high school experience which took place. To the extent possible, I have allowed them to speak in their own words, providing only essential linking commentary from me. In Chapter Three: Methods I explained how the quotations I selected from a much larger mass of interview data have been those which were related to my research questions. The themes of my study are developed by reviewing the content of the material in the quotations chosen which then reveal common elements. More than a few differences of opinion, as well as some sharp conflicts, have become evident as this narrative has proceeded. In Chapter Five, I will offer my commentary on the interview data presented in Chapter Four. I will rely on my personal observations at the high school to provide collaboration for or contradiction to what was said in the interviews. And in addition, informed by the relevant literature, I will draw out from what I observed implications for possibilities to improve high school inclusion of students with significant disabilities.

Observations at the high school:

As noted in Chapter Three: Methods, I employed the participant-observer ethnographic research method. My field notes included two types of information, descriptive and reflective. The descriptive part of the field notes recorded in objective detail the physical setting, the people involved in the interactions observed, accounts of the interactions observed, the reconstruction of any dialogue, and the behaviors of the participants in the setting (Merriam, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan,1998). My field notes also contained reflective information, the subjective part of the observation experience. The emphasis of the reflective part of the field notes was "on speculation, feelings, problems,

ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) relative to the student's inclusion in high school general education classes.

During the five days that I observed (Monday through Friday, randomly chosen) my most significant observation was the student's lack of interaction with his nondisabled peers and the general education teachers. I observed the general education teacher interact with the student's paraeducator, but not with him. The paraeducator and the student would usually situate themselves at the side of the room in order to allow for extra seating for the paraeducator. The student had social interactions with nondisabled students approximately two to three times daily. I observed his overtures were rejected on several occasions as well. The most frequent interactions with nondisabled peers were observed in the Sociology class and in the hallway between classes.

The student had three academic classes, Sociology, Mathematics, and Foods; he also had choir, band, gym, and the rest of the time was spent in study halls. In the Foods class (classified as academic) the students were divided into trimester-long groups by the instructor. The students in his group were all students on IEPs. There were three paraeducators in the room. His other academic classes were Mathematics and Sociology. The math class, while classified as general education, was composed entirely of students who had IEPs. I observed a high percentage of inappropriate behaviors during that class. In addition, the student ate lunch with the mental disabilities (MD) class. I was told that it was his choice. My subjective observation was that certain situations and interactions caused the student to "light-up" and this was not one of them. A typical "light-up" situation would be when he was invited to join a group of nondisabled peers that he knew from a class or from his participation in *Oklahoma*.

I observed that the student took care of his personal needs during the school day, including purchasing and eating his lunch; he was able to find his locker and open a specially adapted lock; he could find his own way to class; at one point the student and I were on our own and he asked me if I wanted to take the elevator (he had a key) or use the stairs. Because of these observations of his independence, I wondered if the assignment of the paraeducator to be with him full-time was appropriate. Particularly because I observed that at times she could be a barrier to the primary goal of his IEP team (i.e., socialization).

I never observed the paraeducator meet with the LRE special educator or the special educator meet with a general education teacher. However I was at the school only during the official school day. Unfortunately, I was not able to hear what the paraeducator said to the general education teachers nor in most of the other conversations I saw taking place.

The most significant findings from my observations are 1) The apparent lack of the realization of the IEP team's goal of socialization for the student with severe disabilities; and 2) the overuse of the paraeducator academically—as a substitute for a trained teacher—and socially—by providing personal assistance to the student at times and in ways that could interfere with his interactions with nondisabled peers. In Chapter Five: Discussion of the Results I will contrast what I observed with the intentions of the IEP team for the inclusion of this young man with severe disabilities.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Chapter Five provides an analysis of the responses to interview questions (see appendices A, B, & C) and personal observations during five school days. The research questions addressed were:

1 A) How do parents and professionals (e.g., school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants) involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it?

1 B) What role did each of them play in preparing for the student's inclusion?

1 C) How did each of them describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion?

2) Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process?

The answers to my research questions are displayed most perspicuously if I take the answer to question two first. The analysis of question two provides the groundwork and context within which I can more effectively answer question one.

Research Question Two

Do the accounts of those individuals involved in the inclusion of the student with severe disabilities align or do they suggest tensions? What was the impact of these alignments or tensions on the inclusion process? Few, if any, human situations involving several individuals are without stresses and tensions. Given the number of parties involved in this student's inclusion and their differing perceptions of the goals of his

inclusion, did such stresses and tensions manifest themselves? If so, how were they handled? What alternative approaches might have reduced areas of discovered conflict, if any?

In order to generate a clear picture of possible alignments and tensions between the key informants I created a worksheet which had all the informants listed across the top as well as down the left side. Next, I systematically looked at each intersection and listed their alignments and tensions on the worksheet. This system made it possible for me to have a clear visual image of each dyad's interactions. I was able to translate these interactions into descriptions that provided an answer to research question two.

One area of general alignment was the belief, held by all the informants, that inclusion is a "good thing." However, a deeper look at that belief revealed that everyone, with the exception of the parents, had a "but" in their response to the question regarding inclusion. Responses such as "there are some dangers in it and some drawbacks" and "it's got to be reasonable and realistic" made it clear that the informants thought that there was a disconnect between the theory of inclusion and the practice. Conversely, the parents saw inclusion in an overwhelmingly positive light. This philosophical difference led to tension between the parents and the other members of the IEP team—especially between them and the special educator, the AEA consultant year two, and the Band instructor.

During the student's first year of inclusion in high school, the assistant principal, the special education teacher, and the paraeducator were in agreement that the student had a behavioral issue. They believed that he was falling asleep in class as an avoidance measure because he was overwhelmed by the demands of inclusion. The parents told them that he had an arousal disorder—a medical problem not a behavioral issue. This

situation caused considerable tension between the special education teacher, who continued to instruct the paraeducator to treat the issue as behavioral, and the parents. Ultimately, the parents sought medical help, the student's medications were adjusted, and the problem resolved itself. This is one example of an alignment with regard to the agreement among all parties that a problem existed; however, tension emerged when there was disagreement in how to resolve the problem. Another area of alignment was the view of the general education teachers and the parents that the student's inclusion in general education classes was providing for academic learning as well as socialization. Parents report that: "If you go to the parent- teacher conferences with those regular ed teachers every one of 'em says, 'We now understand why you want him in here, the importance for his learning, the importance for the other kids' learning, and the importance for our learning.'"

It was clear that the special educator and the AEA consultant year two are aligned in their thinking regarding the student's program. Both of them believed that his academic program should be supplemented with life-skills and job-skills training. The special educator and AEA consultant brought in a life/job-skills specialist to evaluate the student's needs. The specialist thought that the student's performance in some areas could be improved. The special educator and the AEA consultant wanted the student to leave school three afternoons a week for job-skills training. They reported this to the parents at an IEP meeting. The parents believed that the best life-skills training their son could have was observing and interacting with his nondisabled peers. They wanted to wait until after high school for job-skills training, pointing out that their son was entitled to special education services until he was 21 years old. The parents agreed to return to the

topic in the future, although privately stating to me that they did not want the student to leave school during the school day.

This was a significant area of tension between the parents of the student with severe disabilities and the special education teacher and the AEA consultant for the second year of the study. The parents resisted the school's efforts to provide vocational/life-skills training during school hours. The parents of this student were clear that they wanted him in school all day in academic classes with his nondisabled peers.

Each student should be evaluated as being in a unique situation. This student's situation was that the parents were ready and willing to access their community, friends and family, as well as public services, in order to provide employment for their son after high school. They clearly felt that the four years of high school—their son's opportunity to interact with, and observe the behaviors of, nondisabled peers—were too precious to loose.

Ever since the idea of including students with severe disabilities in general education classes for their entire school day became viable, differing views regarding "meaningful" instruction for a student with severe disabilities have been debated. Kliewer (1999), Sandler (1999), and many others have struggled with the question of what to teach and where to teach children with severe disabilities. Because the legal mandates of IDEA (1997, 2004) and NCLB (2001) require that all children must have access to the general education curriculum and have a teacher qualified to teach each subject—an issue of special importance in high school—it would seem that the general education context is the logical place to access the general education curriculum. Some would maintain the two are inseparable (Copeland & Cosbey, 2009; Jackson, et al., 2009;

Ryndak, et al., 2009).

An area of alignment that included the assistant principal, both AEA consultants, the special educator, and the Band instructor was continuing the placement of the student in the first year—that is, introductory—band during his sophomore year. The Band instructor wanted the student with severe disabilities to have a meaningful musical experience. He wished him to play the actual music as it was written or with minor adaptations. The Band instructor was not focused on "the student's only here for socialization"; rather, he wanted to provide meaningful instruction. On the other hand, the Band instructor did not want to move the student up into the sophomore level band because he had concerns regarding the potential for mistakes harming public performances and the difficulty of creating special adaptations for more complex musical pieces. Unfortunately, the IEP team did not share this information with the parents. Instead the IEP team focused on the idea that—because each student must audition in order to qualify for the sophomore level band—simply including the student with severe disabilities without a skill-demonstrating audition would be unfair. *Unfair* is a value-laden and ambiguous term which can lead to disagreement. And it did.

The parents did not agree with this decision. They viewed band as an ideal opportunity for socialization. During his freshman year the student had been in band with a half dozen of his "buddies" from junior high school. It is unclear how many, if any, of the friends that the student had from junior high school remained in the beginning level freshman band in sophomore year. The Band instructor stated that they had (all?) moved up to the second, and even the third, level band.

An area of profound tension resulted. The student's mother related that:

> [AEA consultant, year one] headed the [inclusion resource team] but did not say one word in that whole meeting. As they were screaming at us, accusing us, she didn't say a single word. … It was amazing. [The Band instructor] was pounding on the wall with his fists. Oh, they all were – cut us off – we couldn't finish a phrase. [The school counselor], what was her word? She said, "You are so disrespectful!" because we were disagreeing with [them] and trying to give a different viewpoint.

The parents were in a difficult position on the IEP team. The parents did not feel that they were contributing members of the IEP team. The Band instructor failed to include the parents in conversations with other IEP team members which occurred before the scheduled IEP meeting. Subsequently, when the parents presented their point of view during the IEP meeting, they were met with silence from the AEA consultant and open hostility from others. The unprofessional behavior of some members of the IEP team left the parents feeling disenfranchised. It is no surprise that the parents felt that they needed "back-up" at future IEP meetings.

The parents and the Drama teacher were in alignment regarding the very positive experience that being in the musical *Oklahoma* was for the student. The Drama teacher stated that

> His energy on the stage during the entire performance, during the entire rehearsal process, was wonderful … His focus was much better than many of my other students on the stage because he really, really loved being there.

And the student's parents reported that:

> The kids were absolutely wonderful to him. He was so a part of that group. He loved the practices. They had … cast parties every night (during the performances). And he had somebody (a nondisabled peer) who would take him to the cast party.

The only unfortunate note was the opinion of the special education teacher that the student had displaced a nondisabled peer when he was included in the school musical. She first heard about the student's participation in *Oklahoma* from the paraeducator who

had heard from “some girls” that the student was being included at their expense. A female student complained to her, and it was very disappointing to learn that the special educator assumed the information given to her by a high school girl was accurate. She simply accepted what was school gossip as the truth. She never discussed the issue with the Drama teacher. Further investigation by the special education teacher may have been warranted before an assumption was made. It proved to be an assumption that was not true. Fortunately, this assumption never became a point of tension between the special educator and the parents, because the parents were not aware of her opinion.

Tension and confusion seemed to be the norm in the communication process. Several dyads were affected: parent/paraeducator, parent/special educator, and parent/Band instructor. Communication started to break down when the home-school traveling notebook and e-mail became the norm. When this occurred, the IEP team would return to face-to-face communication. One area of alignment was between the assistant principal and the special education teacher. During sophomore year the assistant principal began responding to all phone calls from the parents to the special educator. The parents reported that they thought it had to do with the special educator’s perception that they were “ugly”—meaning difficult and demanding parents.

The one aspect of the communication process which seemed counter-productive was the special educator’s determination that all communication should flow through her. Because it is not unusual for a parent to speak to his or her child’s teacher directly, I questioned the reason for this practice. The special educator said that she was concerned about the communication becoming fragmented; but, in fact, so many people were

involved that communication—especially between the parents and the band instructors—*did* break down.

One area of alignment among all the participants was the effectiveness of the paraeducator during year two. The AEA consultant year two called her "the best paraeducator I've ever had contact with." General education teachers were unanimous that year two went well because the paraeducator was excellent—adapting materials, modifying tests and keeping the student focused. The parents stated that she met and exceeded their expectation for academic support. And yet there was another area of alignment, less positive: Both the AEA consultant and the Band instructor questioned the efficacy, for purposes of socialization, of having an adult as the student's constant companion—a topic that will be discussed in detail in the answer to question 1 part C.

Research Question 1 Part A

How do parents and professionals involved in the process of the inclusion of a student with severe disabilities in general education high school classes define inclusion? How do they characterize their attitudes toward it?

The overall positive response to the idea of inclusion from all of the interviewees was not surprising. As stated in Chapter Three: Methods, this researcher believed the individuals who agreed to talk to her had a positive view of inclusion and consequently were willing to talk about it. One suspected that the potential interviewees who did not share a positive view opted out of this research study. In addition, a number of studies discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review suggest that most educators have generally positive opinions about inclusion. In a qualitative study conducted by Sebastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998), the general education teachers' initial beliefs that including

students with severe disabilities was the "right thing" to do were validated by actual experience with the students. Agran, Alper, and Wehmeyer (2002) conducted a survey to obtain special education teachers' opinions relating to access to the general curriculum for students with severe disabilities. The respondents regarded the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classes as a positive experience for their students. Carter and Hughes (2006) specifically examined high school inclusion and found that the opinions of both special and general education teachers were positive regarding the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

As indicated in Chapter Two: Literature Review, the impetus for inclusion of students with severe disabilities—physical, social and academic—has come from their parents (Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang & Walberg, 1988). This impetus or push has often led to disagreements with the school, some of which resulted in litigation. The outcomes of this litigation (e.g., Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education, 1989; Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon, 1993) have determined what it is that the school must provide.

Throughout the interviews the student's parents were seen by the assistant principal, the special education teacher, and the AEA consultant (sophomore year) as asking for something more than was their legal right, or—where it was acknowledged that it was their legal right—were perceived as being unreasonable and demanding parents. As mentioned earlier, during the student's freshman year the student had a behavior (falling asleep in class) that was interpreted by the special educator as avoidance. Because of this behavior the assistant principal, the special educator, and one paraeducator raised the issue of self-determination for the student and questioned whether

this inclusive high school experience was actually what the student wanted: Was he being pushed into it by his parents? During the student's first year the parents took the student to the doctor and verified that the problem was indeed a medical one and not behavioral. Even so, the special educator continued to advise the paraeducator during the second half of the student's freshman year to treat the problem as behavioral. The parents reported that:

> I think [paraeducator #2] tried hard. She didn't have a lot of support from [the special education teacher]. She was getting a [different] message from us. The poor thing was stuck in the middle. We were saying "Medical, medical, medical!" And [the special education teacher] was saying, "Behavior, behavior, behavior!" And the poor little associate was stuck in the middle. "Do I yank him out of class or do I let him sleep?" So she was a basket case, just like the rest of us by the end of the [freshman] year.

The student's medications were adjusted, and the problem of falling asleep in class did not resurface during the student's second year.

The assistant principal stated that he was not comfortable with a student having "seven periods of socialization." In fact the parents had *not* in junior high school—and were *not* in senior high school—simply seeking social inclusion. They wanted academic inclusion for their child. The parents thought that their son "learned way more" in his general education classes than he did in a self-contained special education class. This belief of the parents is shared by other parents of children with severe disabilities. Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) conducted a qualitative investigation of 140 parents of students with severe disabilities, ages three to twenty-three. The reasons parents supported inclusion in their study included the belief that the child would learn more in a general education classroom.

The special educator's comments were particularly revealing of her perception of

the student with severe disabilities; "And if they [general education teachers] have any questions we connect with, you know, agencies that can answer questions or the school nurse." The special educator's perception of the student was of an individual who "needs a lot of assistance to get through the day because of certain health needs, physical needs." It is true that the student had some physical/health issues, but once the parents resolved the most pressing medical issue (falling asleep in class), this researcher did not herself observe any other physical issue that would impede his learning in a general education classroom. During the researcher's five days of observation of the student, he functioned independently during daily life routines—toileting, getting and eating his lunch, moving from place to place around the school. No falling asleep or other problematic behaviors were observed.

The student's parents and general education teachers were often surprised by what he was able to understand and retain. The student's English teacher reports that:

> My guess was most of the things like the short stories and the shorter works I think were read to him at home. That's what I assumed was going on. Because it was obvious that he knew the stories. When we did a short story unit he knew what had gone on. Like what I mentioned earlier, he was able to answer all of the questions. They were probably recall questions about the story or, you know, trying to get at what was going on in the story.

And yet not once did anyone, not even his parents, suggest that the student's IEP contain academic goals. An actual academic goal for a student with severe disabilities in general education classes was a bridge that no one appeared to want to cross. But real academic goals for children with severe disabilities are at the heart of access to the general education curriculum mandated in IDEA (1997), reemphasized in IDEA (2004), and implied in NCLB (2001), although they were not present in this student's IEP in 1999-2000. Jackson, Ryndak, and Wehmeyer (2010) explored the relationship among context,

curriculum, and student learning for students with severe disabilities. They concluded that "the theoretical and empirical support exists for using general education contexts and curriculum content and for not using other contexts and curriculum content in educating students with severe disabilities." Following this recommendation would effectively eliminate the self-contained special education classroom, a functional curriculum, and community-based training.

Even though both AEA consultants had many years of teaching experience, they had been away from classroom teaching for some time. While the classroom teachers, both special and general educators, provided definitions of inclusion that were founded in their own immediate experiences, the consultants defined inclusion as an abstract idea: "It's an attitude, a way of thinking, a belief system that we all belong and that we all have equal rights to be in the school community and have access to the services, to the activities, and to participate in the classroom with non-handicapped peers."

As indicated more than once in interviews with them, the parents of the student with severe disabilities felt that they needed to misrepresent their goals for their son's inclusion to the high school authorities in order to insure that he received the academic instruction they desired for him. The parents wanted academic goals for their son and yet were not willing to make that clear to the IEP team. The IEP team had seen, and knew, the content of the student's previous IEP. In junior high school the special educator wrote the IEP so that the student had a goal or goals in each of his academic classes. The high school special educator wrote generic goals that focused on socialization and functional academics (e.g., writing a person's name, making change). Lake and Billingsly (2000) examined the attitudes of parents and school officials and highlighted

factors which were found to be areas of disagreement that increased conflict. These included, but were not limited to, a discrepant view of a child or the child's needs between parent and school officials and a lack of agreement on service delivery (e.g., placement, goals, curriculum).

The special educator seemed resistant to the idea that the student with severe disabilities could make academic gains. She reported in her interviews with this researcher that she did not think that the student could make any academic progress beyond the second/third grade level (her test-supported perception of his cognitive limitation). However, his parents and the general education teachers reported that he often surprised them by what he was able to remember and understand regarding the academic content and activities in his classes. The special educator's reasoning—and it appeared to be shared by the AEA consultant, sophomore year—was that high school class content was much more difficult than any content he had encountered before. That is certainly true. But the special education teacher made the decision without really trying to work with the general education teachers to insure academic gains. Her goal—and one assumes that it was communicated to the teachers—was maximum participation *for socialization purposes only* even though the findings of numerous studies have shown that students with severe disabilities can make academic progress and meet academic goals in general education classes (Daniel, & King, 1998; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtin & Goetz, 1994; Hunt & Goetz, 1997, McDonnell, 1998).

In supporting children with severe disabilities as they access the general education context and curriculum it is important to adapt a presumption-of-competence perspective when considering what constitutes an appropriate education program for such students.

This perspective requires that one start with a premise that a student *can* meet expectations associated with the education of typical peers, rather than using the more prevalent staring point that disability makes such an expectation inherently unrealistic (Jackson, Ryndak, Wehmeyer, 2009). In the current study, the presumption of competence would have insured that the student had academic goals for each of his classes.

In the previously mentioned study by Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) interview questions focused on why the parents of students with severe disabilities, ages three to twenty-three, were supportive of, or resistant to, inclusive education. The reasons parents supported inclusion included the conviction that the child would learn more in a general education classroom. Grove and Fisher (1999) conducted a qualitative study based on interviews of 20 parents of children with severe disabilities, ages six to seventeen years. The results showed that the process of inclusive education extends beyond the initial placement decision to the parents' ongoing involvement at the school site. The study revealed that it was most often parents who gathered information on inclusion, presented the information to the school, and helped to provide the in-service information for school staff and adjustments to school setting in order to facilitate their child's inclusion. At the schools the parents actively participated in the work of inclusion, thereby shaping the definition and the reality of inclusive education for their children. Grove and Fisher's study was conducted in an effort to provide a starting point for understanding inclusion as a cultural product: Parents try to insure that their child's educational goals are met as they wrestle with the day-to-day realities of the inclusion process. While parents were not in the classroom doing the actual work of meeting the

child's educational goals, they were able to provide suggestions for adaptations and accommodations that have worked for their child in the past, and through their own reading and research, brought new and innovative ideas to the attention of the IEP team.

Research Question 1 Part B

What role did each of them (parents and educators) play in preparing for the student's inclusion?

Many meetings took place —between the student, the assistant principal in charge of special education, and the junior high school special education teacher; between the special educator (LRE support person) and the high school teachers; between the student's parents and the high school teachers for his first trimester; and between individual general education teachers and the special education teacher. While the student with severe disabilities was still in junior high school a series of meetings took place in anticipation of his forthcoming high school inclusion. None of the meetings included all of the adults involved in his inclusion in high school, but each meeting included two or more of the key individuals—school administrators, special education staff, general education teachers, AEA special education consultants, or the student's parents. Everyone seemed pleased with the outcome of these meetings. Meeting face-to-face was a communication style that worked. Unfortunately, this is a time-consuming process that cannot take place daily or even weekly. The parents report meeting with the student's general education teachers at the end of each trimester during the parent-teacher conferences.

The person chosen by the high school to be the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) support-teacher for the students with severe disabilities in general education

classes was a “resource room” special education teacher. Her role was to supervise several paraeducators as they worked in the general education classes with the students with disabilities. She had one class period a day available to interact with any of the paraeducators, a period used for problem-solving and adapting curriculum as well as for reviewing the home-school communication notebook. The special education teacher made no mention of collaboration or co-teaching with the general education teachers. She said that, as each new trimester began, she would meet with any teacher who had not previously taught the student. In one case this did not happen. One of the general education teachers commented that she had not received a list of accommodations for the student with severe disabilities until two weeks into the trimester during which she had the student in class. The time between trimesters is sometimes short, but the special educator knows the student’s schedule for the entire year. It is very important that the special education teacher give the general education teacher the IEP requirements for accommodations *before* the trimester starts. The results of a study by Lake and Billingsley (2000) indicated that among several factors which can cause conflict around the inclusive school placement of students with disabilities are constraints on resources, especially inadequate time and poor communication. Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook , Dvorsky, Nietupski, and Costanza (1999) found in their qualitative study that one of the key elements critical to successful inclusion was effective communication and collaboration among staff.

The student’s general education teachers took a wait-and-see approach. All the meetings that took place to help the high school teachers understand a student with severe disabilities were admirable. Without those meetings they would have been in a sea of

trouble. But no amount of talking about a child with severe disabilities can fully prepare a teacher, especially a teacher not trained in special education, for the reality of teaching a student with severe disabilities. Each student with severe disabilities is unique in ways that challenge the general education teacher's resourcefulness. Ideally, an inclusion specialist with training in severe disabilities should be available as a consultant. Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski, and Costanza (1999) reported in a qualitative study of three students with severe disabilities included in general education age-appropriate classrooms in elementary school that, in the school where inclusion was the most successful, prominent among the elements critical to the students' success was ongoing direct service from a consultant knowledgeable in the area of severe disabilities.

The AEA consultant, in year one, did play a key role in preparing for the inclusion of this student with severe disabilities by assisting in the organization of the various meetings, providing content for the meetings, and always being present at the meetings to answer questions. This AEA consultant was an expert in the area of implementing inclusion as well as in the needs of individuals with severe disabilities.

In the spring of the student's eighth grade year the IEP team met and designed an education program for his high school inclusion that satisfied the student's parents. The parents were looking forward to the student's continued involvement in academic classes and appreciated the careful selection of teachers made by the team. One was impressed by the school district's willingness to pay for a support person for the student when he participated in band activities before the school year started and also for band activities that took place outside of school hours after the school year began. IDEA (1997, 2004) states that it is a requirement for the school district to make it possible for a student with disabilities to participate in

extracurricular activities by providing a support person and this requirement was being honored.

For the most part the mechanics of preparing for this student's inclusion in high school were appropriate and thorough, with only the rare discrepancy, as in the late delivery to one teacher of the list of accommodations.

Research Question 1 Part C

How did each of them (parents and educators) describe their part in the process of the student's inclusion?

It is clear from the interviews with the AEA consultant, administrators, and special education teacher that this student would not have been included in general education classes in high school if he had not previously been included in elementary and junior high school. Even if these individuals believed that a self-contained class with a functional and vocational curriculum was the better choice for a student with severe disabilities—and one judges that they did—once an individual has shown that he or she can function in a general education environment, it would not be appropriate to return that individual to a self-contained classroom. IDEA (1997, 2004) mandates that all children with disabilities be educated in the general education environment. Only after all appropriate supports and services have been provided within that environment can students be removed to an alternate setting if they cannot function adequately within the general education environment.

Can content-area goals be rewritten, perhaps simplified, so that they are realistic goals for students with severe disabilities? All of the student's general education teachers did have the goal of maximum participation in the class activities for him. With the help

of the special educator and the paraeducator they adapted and modified the curriculum for the subjects they taught. The student with severe disabilities worked in groups, produced worksheets, gave a presentation, wrote a journal, and took quizzes.

These were caring, capable teachers, "hand-picked" because they had shown that they were sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities. An unfortunate side-effect of the generosity of such teachers is that they are often given an unfair share of the responsibility for the education of students with disabilities (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Another problem with this approach is implied in the interview data: "We kind of went through [the list of possible freshman courses] and tried to—we decided no science, because she [the special education teacher] wasn't sure she could find a teacher that would be open to having him." As a result, the student did not have a science course until his junior year.

It is easy to see that creating a curriculum with individualized subject content—one that takes into account differing ability levels—is more work and requires a different mindset than creating a curriculum that is one-size-fits-all. In addition to that, the role of the teacher carries with it a deep and unconscious "job description." Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) write that:

> Despite the consistent and often urgent calls for teachers to attend to individual learners' needs, and in spite of daily evidence that one-size-fits-all instruction fails many, if not most, students, it is extraordinarily difficult for us to pull away from antiquated conceptions and embrace more contemporary and effective ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

The education of students with disabilities is at risk if it rests only on the shoulders of a few generous and forward- thinking teachers. Because both IDEAs (1997, 2004) require that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum, and

because some researchers maintain that the general education curriculum and the general education environment are inseparable (Agran, et al., 2010), the entire faculty must become convinced that differentiating instruction is now the norm. In addition, NCLB's (2001) requirement that each student be taught by a qualified teacher especially impacts high school classes. A qualified high school teacher is a teacher certified to teach high school content in their specific subject area (Wright & Wright, 2007).

The special education teacher was committed to facilitating the student's inclusion for socialization purposes because that was the decision of the IEP team. She did not see the possibility or the desirability of including this student with severe disabilities in general education classes for academic goals and growth. She commented in the interviews that his freshman schedule was "way too academic." Risks are posed when disability labels affect educator perceptions of competency. Presumption-of-competence provides a perspective which proposes that a child with severe disabilities can meet the expectations of the general education classroom and learn what his or her typical peers are being taught (Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2010).

Although one of the general education teachers commented that they had "a lot of special education in-services," the general education teachers did not seem to understand the IEP process or their part in it. All the teachers interviewed seemed vague about their attendance at any IEP meetings, commenting that "I go if I have time." With this sort of open-ended attendance requirement, one wonders how the school ever insured that there was a general education teacher present at every IEP meeting—a requirement for a student with disabilities who spends any time in general education classes. The band instructor was actually not sure if he had been at the IEP meeting during which the team

had written the student's freshman year IEP. He was, however, the general education teacher at the planning meeting for the student's sophomore year IEP.

It seems obvious that, if a student with severe disabilities is to be included in general education classes in high school in a meaningful way, the general education teachers and the special educator must review the lesson plans and goals and activities in the general education classes. The special educator and the general education teacher need to collaborate on how the necessary adaptations or accommodations will be implemented (Hamill & Everington, 2002). One general education teacher stated that it was easier to include the student with severe disabilities than some of her other students on an IEP because this student did not have any academic goals.

The special educator went over the IEP requirements for the student with severe disabilities with the paraeducator. She also went over the possible accommodations and adaptations with her. The interview process and classroom observations also indicated that the paraeducator and the general education teachers developed accommodations for the student with the primary goal of inclusion for socialization.

A common approach to supporting students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms is to hire a paraeducator to attend general education classes with the student (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001b). The assignment of paraeducators to students with disabilities in general education classes is meant to provide support for the student and the general education teacher and to create a liaison between general and special education and parents (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001a). Unfortunately, the more-or-less automatic assignment of a fulltime paraeducator to any student with severe disabilities placed in general education classes has become

something of an unquestioned reaction on the part of IEP teams (Giangreco, Smith, Pinckney, 2006).

The key individuals involved in the student's inclusion in general education classes in high school rated the presence of the student's sophomore-year paraeducator as crucial to everything that was successful about that year. But would it have been possible for the student to be less dependent on the paraeducator? Even early in his freshman year, one of the student's teachers remarked that "I remember one day [paraeducator #1] was gone, and I think [the student] was on his own. I don't think they were able to get someone. And he loved those days. That was I think his glory when he could do it on his own. And I said, I asked him how was your day and he's like … I just heard him make a comment about it was the best day he had had."

Is it the paraeducator's proper role to assist the student with severe disabilities or to assist the general education teachers, which she did in many significant ways? Based on the interviews of parents, teachers, AEA personnel, administrators and the paraeducator, and observations in the student's general education classes, it was the paraeducator who made the day-to-day, minute-to-minute curricular adaptations. The behavioral science teacher's thoughts were typical: "But if you would have had someone that wasn't as good as [paraeducator #3], wasn't as bright, wasn't as creative, it would not have been as good. I mean, it would have been a real struggle for me to have written that modified test. I wouldn't have had time. And there were certain times I know I wouldn't have had time to do it." At times the paraeducator did work together with the general educator to create adapted materials for the student. But both the AEA personnel and the special educator lauded the paraeducator for being able to make adaptations "on

the spot" as well. This is problematic, because the actual instruction of the student with disabilities is placed in the hands of a person whom everyone agrees is "untrained."

In a due-process decision in Iowa (Linn-Mar Community School District, 2004) an administrative law judge determined the school district denied a high school student with autism free appropriate public education (FAPE) for three years because the paraeducator was responsible for the selection of instructional materials, data collection, and behavior management. As a result the student's isolation increased even though the IEP called for increased socialization.

Observations, as recorded in this researcher's field notes, suggest that the paraeducator's effect on the student's inclusion was not altogether positive and productive, particularly in light of the fact that the primary stated goal of the student's high school inclusion was socialization. From the researcher's field notes: "Regular education student (not on an IEP) asks [the student] a question—para starts to talk to regular education student. [Student] looks sad." This is not a criticism of the paraeducator's response. She probably had the answer to the question, and she knew that the student did not; but her response put an end to an interaction between the student and a peer.

Studies focused primarily on the elementary school years have shown that "the more inclusion–the more social interactions" between students with severe disabilities and their non-disabled peers (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Kennedy, Shukla, & Fryxell, 1997). However, Carter, et al. (2005) discovered that the quantity and quality of social interactions between students with severe disabilities and their non-disabled peers did *not* increase when students with severe disabilities were simply placed in high school settings

with their non-disabled peers. This researcher's field notes, covering five days of observation, support the Carter, et al. (2005) finding that the occurrences of interaction between the student and his peers were few and far between.

Carter, et al. (2005) found that when these social interactions did increase it was the result of a peer buddy being in close proximity to his or her partner with severe disabilities and the peer buddy encouraging/supporting such interactions. Carter, et al. (2005) also concluded that absent positive steps—such as a peer-buddy system or active teacher intervention—the simple presence of students with severe disabilities in a larger group of non-disabled peers will not, by itself, promote greater social interaction between individuals from the two groups. "Unless educators take deliberate steps to facilitate social interaction among students with and those without severe intellectual disabilities … it is unlikely to occur."

After conducting several studies on the topic of interactions between students with severe disabilities and their peers in high school general education classes Hughes and Carter (2008) determined that, without peer support, interaction would probably not happen. Hughes and Carter (2008) determined that a high school service-learning program which teamed up students with severe disabilities and peer buddies for general education classes and activities in high school would lead to increased socialization for students with severe disabilities. The result of their efforts was the book, *Peer Buddy Programs for Successful Secondary School Inclusion.* A second book by Carter, Cushing, and Kennedy (2009) *Peer Support Strategies for Improving All Students' Social Lives and Learning* addressed similar concerns.

A case in point is the student's participation in the high school musical production

Oklahoma—a highlight of his inclusion. Although their son's band experience during sophomore year was not all that the parents would have wanted, his participation in *Oklahoma* was a significant step toward increased socialization and independence. He was able to attend all rehearsals and performances without paraeducator assistance. His parents reported that he was able to participate in all the "after performance" parties with only peer assistance. There is no doubt that the peer support received by the student with severe disabilities during the rehearsals and performances for *Oklahoma*, as well as the cast parties, provided some of his most important opportunities for socialization.

A Future Research Design

A Story of High School Inclusion is an ethnographic case study of the members (i.e., administrators, consultants, special education staff, general education teachers, and parents) of an IEP team during one young man's generally successful, but occasionally controversial, inclusion in high school in 1998-2000. Since then two pieces of federal legislation, NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004), have impacted the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. NCLB (2001), with its focus on outcome measurement, the use of scientifically-based practices, and the employment of highly qualified teachers has created new requirements for special education (Bouck, 2009; Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup, & Palmer, 2010). IDEA (2004) requires that students' IEPs complement general curricular frameworks so that each student with a disability has the opportunity to access the general education curriculum and participate in state-wide assessments in order to meet state standards. Agran, Wehmeyer, Cavin, and Palmer (2010) question whether the general education curriculum and the general education context can successfully be separated.

Three recommendations for future research in the areas of collaboration, IEP teams and high school inclusion are: 1) Replicate the present study, adjusting for several design limitations (e.g., by interviewing the student, increasing the number of classroom observations, interviewing all of the paraeducators and all of the general education teachers, and attending all of the IEP meetings) to explore how inclusion in the second decade of the 21st century is occurring, and perhaps identify how changes in education law have impacted the inclusion of students with severe disabilities; 2) Replicate the current study, with a greater focus on a student with severe disabilities and the nondisabled peers as the subject, for the purpose of exploring the attitudes toward inclusion of the nondisabled peers and observing the quantity, locations, and types of interactions between the student with severe disabilities and the nondisabled peers; 3) Expand the study to include more students with severe disabilities, their families, and their IEP teams.

A fourth recommendation would be to focus research on the role and opinions of general education teachers and explore specifically the strategies and approaches that they employ to include a student with severe disabilities in their classes. A minimum group of 20 general education high school teachers who have included, or are currently including, students with severe disabilities in their classes would be the first step in this line of research. In addition, preliminary observations and field testing of questions should be carried out prior to beginning any future study. Doing so almost certainly would generate new and valuable questions to be asked at the interviews. It would be beneficial to conduct follow-up interviews after formal observations are made. Obtaining actual student work samples should be an essential part of future studies. In the literature

there are articles and books (Ryndak & Alper, 2003; Kennedy & Horn, 2004; Lee, & et al., 2006) that describe how one *could* include students with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school. What is lacking are real-world classroom examples, concrete suggestions of what to try—why—and with whom. Armed with that knowledge, there will be a greater possibility of building a consensus on best practices for including students with severe disabilities in general education classes in high school.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE — PARENTS

Topics and Related Questions:

1) Family configuration and demographics

Describe your job. How many children do you have in your family? Where does Steven fit in the birth order?

2) Subject's history: Personal, medical, academic, social

How did Steven come to join your family? Would you describe Steven's disability? Would you describe Steven's schooling so far? His leisure activities?

3) Reasons for wanting Steven included in regular education classes; issues of functional community-based curriculum and vocational preparation

How would you define the term "inclusion?" What is your opinion of inclusion, as you define it, for students with disabilities like Steven's? How would you define functional community-based curriculum? Describe how this concept plays out in Steven's education. Describe how Steven's education will prepare him for employment and adult life.

4) Process of obtaining inclusive placement for Steven

How did it happen that Steven was placed in regular education classes?

5) In the beginning:

Any preparation before school starts; choice of classes, teachers, paraeducator; communication with school; involvement of the AEA/IEP team.

Describe how you prepared for Steven's first year in high school. Describe Steven's school day. How did you choose Steven's classes? regular and special ed teachers? paraeducator? Describe your interactions with the school (teachers, paraeducator, others). Describe the involvement of the IEP team; the AEA consultant.

6) How are things going:

Adaptations and accommodations; homework; grading; friendships with non-disabled peers; extracurricular activities; communication with school; involvement of the AEA/IEP team.

Are you aware of anything that was done differently in Steven's classes because he was a member of the class? Describe the outcomes you had in mind for Steven's participation in each class. Describe Steven's homework assignments. Describe the procedure for giving Steven a grade in each class. Describe Steven's involvement with his high school peers; his involvement in extracurricular activities. Describe your interactions with the school during the school year. Describe the involvement of the IEP team, AEA consultant, during the school year.

7) <u>End of school year</u>: How did it all turn out – what worked – what didn't.

Describe your interactions with the school at the end of the school year. Describe any culminating events or activities that took place at the end of the school year. Describe how you think Steven was affected by his participation in regular education classes. Describe how you were affected by Steven's participation in regular education classes in high school.

If you could give me one word to describe the past year, what would it be? Why? Could anything have made last year better? Do you want to change anything for the next school year?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding Steven's school experience?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE – TEACHERS, CONSULTANTS, PARAEDUCATORS*

Topics and Related Questions: * Questions were modified according to the role of the respondent.

1) Demographics

How long have you taught high school classes? What subjects? Which schools?

2) Experience

Do you have any students with disabilities in your classes? Had you ever taught a student with a disability like Steven's?

3) Attitude towards inclusion

How would you define the term "inclusion?" What do you think about inclusion, as you define it, for students with disabilities like Steven's?

4) Process of obtaining inclusive placement for Steven

How did it happen that Steven was placed in your class?

5) In the beginning:

Any preparation before school starts; involvement with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven; involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team; friendships with non-disabled peers.

Describe how you prepared for Steven's participation in your class. Describe Steven's participation in your class. Describe your interactions with the family, special education teacher, paraeducator, the AEA consultant (ask each question separately). Describe your involvement in the IEP team. Describe Steven's involvement with his peers at the beginning of the school year.

6) How are things going:

Adaptations and accommodations; homework; grading; communication with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven; involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team; friendships with non-disabled peers; extracurricular activities.

Was anything different because Steven was a member of your class? Describe Steven's participation in your class (middle of the year). Describe the outcomes

you had in mind for Steven's participation in your class. Describe Steven's homework assignments. Describe the procedure for giving Steven a grade in your class. Describe your interactions with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven; involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team, in the How's it going (ask each question separately). Describe Steven's involvement with his high school peers; his involvement in extracurricular activities.

7) End of school year: How did it all turn out – what worked – what didn't.

Describe Steven's participation in your class (end of school year). Describe any culminating events or activities that took place at the end of the school year. Describe how you think Steven was affected by his participation in your class. Describe how you were affected by Steven's participation in your class. Describe your interactions with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven; involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team, at the end of the school year (ask each question separately).

If you could give me one word to describe including Steven in your class last year, what would it be? Why? Would anything have made the year better? Is there anything you would change?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about including Steven in your class last year?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE – ADMINISTRATORS

Topics and Related Questions:

1) Demographics

How long have you been a school administrator? How long were you a teacher? What subjects?

2) Attitude towards inclusion

How would you define the term "inclusion?"

How would you describe Steven?

What do you think about inclusion for students with disabilities like Steven's?

3) Experience

Did you ever teach students with disabilities in your classes?

Had you ever taught a student with a disability like Steven's?

4) Process of obtaining inclusive placement for Steven

How did it happen that Steven was placed in regular education classes?

5) Beginning of school year:

Any preparation before school starts; involvement with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven; involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team; friendships with non-disabled peers.

Describe how you prepared for Steven's participation in your school.

Describe your interactions with the family, special education teacher, paraeducator, the AEA consultant (ask each question separately).

Describe your involvement in the IEP team.

6) How's it going:

Adaptations and accommodations; homework; grading; communication with the paraeducator, with the special educator, with the family, with Steven;

involvement with the AEA consultant, IEP team; friendships with non-disabled peers; extracurricular activities.

Are you aware of anything that was different in Steven's classes because he was a member of the class?

Was anything different because Steven was a freshman at your high school? Describe the outcomes you had in mind for Steven's participation in high school.

Describe the procedure for giving Steven a grade. Will Steven receive a high school diploma?

Are you aware of Steven's involvement with his high school peers; his involvement in extracurricular activities.

7) <u>End of school year</u>: How did it all turn out – what worked – what didn't.

Are you aware of any culminating events or activities that took place at the end of the school year?

How you think Steven was affected by his participation in general education classes?

Describe how you were affected by Steven's participation general education classes.

If you could give me one word to describe including Steven in your class last year, what would it be? Why? Would anything have made the year better? Is there anything you would change?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about including Steven in your class last year?

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