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Up-setting the Apple Cart: Mitigating Potentially Disabling Barriers in Education

Amy Tepper
National Louis University

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UP-SETTING THE APPLE CART:
MITIGATING POTENTIALLY DISABLING BARRIERS IN EDUCATION

Amy Tepper
Disability and Equity in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education

National College of Education
National Louis University

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Up-Setting the Apple Cart:
Mitigating Potentially Disabling Barriers in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
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Amy Tepper Karolewicz
Disability and Equity in Education

Approved:

Valerie Owen
Chair/Co-Chair, Dissertation Committee

Patrick Schwartz
Co-Chair/Member, Dissertation Committee

Sharon Duncan
Member, Dissertation Committee

Roma Wakefield
Dean's Representative

Veronica Smith
Program Director

Susan L. McMahon
Director, Doctoral Programs

Alvin
Dean, National College of Education

11-30-15
Date Approved

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Abstract

In this study, certified general and special educators, school administrators, as well as paraprofessionals (program, classroom, and/or individual assistants), and school-based specialists (speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, etc.) were surveyed regarding their opinions specific to the impact of potentially disabling barriers for students within the educational setting. In addition to the survey data, follow-up interviews were conducted with five select survey participants. The interview participants were selected based upon their assenting and/or dissenting opinions/responses, as well as their professional role within an educational context. The interviews were completed as a means of deriving additional, inimitable, solutions-focused insights regarding transforming education to the mutual benefit of all students and educators- of all talents and abilities. The conclusions drawn from this line of research indicated the following: instructional environments should be designed to provide maximally supportive learning opportunities; education professionals need to consistently and appropriately provide effective strategies of differentiation in both their instruction, as well as in their assessments; and, there must be a conscientious facilitation of interdependence among students, adults, and the community at-large in order to empower all stakeholders and ensure equitable curricular access for all learners. Additionally, this researcher is proposing a novel framework concerning the aforementioned findings which has the potential to revolutionize how educators engage with, and instruct, their students.

Keywords: potentially disabling barriers, transforming education, facilitation of interdependence, equitable curricular access

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Joseph – for you never gave up on me, and showed me how to believe in myself...even when I forgot how to do so – lala...xoxo.

Dedication

For Joseph Elliot Karolewicz-

My greatest achievement, second to none.

For Pretty-

My rock...Mine.

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Chapter One

Introduction

I had abominable dreams – which seemed to be a compendium of all the tales of Edgar Allen Poe: myself being split in twain by monstrous mechanisms, drowned in a whirling vortex of mud, being immured in stone and, most fearsomely, buried alive. All night long I had the sensation of helplessness, speechlessness, an inability to move or cry out against the inexorable weight of earth as it was flung in *thud-thud-thuding* rhythm against my rigidly paralyzed, supine body. A living cadaver being prepared for burial in the sands of Egypt.

– Stingo, in *Sophie's Choice*
(Styron 1976)

Of endings and new beginnings I have dreamt. I have transgressed in subjugation and atoned in supplication. I have lain complicit in the power of knowledge; risen above its allure in reason to empower. I have questioned. I have overcome. I have followed and I have led. I am fallible. I am transcendent. I am common. I am exceptional. A perpetrator; a victim; ignoramus; sage; rational; sentient – I am human...we are all human. Of such things I speak, they are my truth.

Suspending Belief

Truth does not require belief; it exists. My truth exists despite the manifestation of prescribed competencies unabashedly dispensed by the impenitent- despite the prevarication of socially constructed systems and institutions, despite the marring gaze – despite the lies. Lies rely upon the suspension of common sense; they exist in order to maintain social control and to sustain power relationships. Lies require belief, in accordance with Toltec teachings:

The first lie you believe is you *are not*. You *are not* perfect. We are born perfect, we grow up perfect, and we will die perfect, because only perfection exists. But the big lie is that you are not perfect, that nobody is perfect. So you start to search for an image of perfection that you can never become. You will never reach perfection in that way because the image is false. It's a lie, but you invest your faith in that lie, and then you build a whole structure of lies to support it. (Ruiz, 2004, p. 20)

Lies require the belief in binary relationships; in the systematic establishment of a set of arbitrary normative standards; in a set of acceptable beliefs and socialized practices – ingrained practices, ignorant practices – mandated by a group's leaders; unquestioningly adhered to and maintained by the group's membership in order to perceive, interpret, rationalize, and justify the circumstances of their existence in a highly specific manner.

“When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions”

(Woodson, 1933, p. xix), because his actions are reflective of, and in accordance to, his thoughts, to his programming, to his constructed identity and to his rendering of personal truth, as well as individual and group identity. It is the greatest of all lies – that we ‘are not’. It is, in my opinion, the foundation of group thinking and the premise in disregard of the Other.¹ This belief substantiates the assertion and adherence to the indiscriminately imposed standards of valued behavioral normativity; it extends into the practice of establishing formal policies and practices that impact a range of groups that share common/similar beliefs and practices and subsequently mutually benefit from the enacting of programs that consequently exclude those deemed Other. It is a perpetual cycle of justified inequality. This institutionalized inequality and systemic injustice contribute innumerable to the process of advancing the success of some, and the failings of Others. Those in the dominant majority, benefitting from the status quo, are complicit in the marginalizing of Others. For example, racial segregation in public domains was once justified by the white majority as a means of preserving the sanctity of traditionally white institutions without the slightest consideration or regard of one of this nation's

¹‘Other’, as defined as an individual, or collective group of individuals, victimized through the processes of: exploitation, cultural imperialism, oppression, violence, and/or powerlessness (Young, 2000) by those framed within the majority.

founding tenets – that all men are created equal. For those in the majority, their ignorance is their bliss, and they perpetually live unaware of the circumstances beyond their horizon of belief. According to Young (2002):

Structural social and economic inequalities thus often operate to exclude or marginalize the voice and influence of some groups while magnifying the influence of others. Where there are structural inequalities of wealth and power, formally democratic procedures are likely to reinforce them, because privileged people are able to marginalize the voices and issues of those less privileged. (p. 34)

As such, we either ignorantly remain captive in our belief of the lie that we ‘are not’, are benefactors of the lie, or we are simply indifferent and complicit despite our awareness – we exist and interact as socialized individuals, as constructed group members; we are self-righteous pawns encapsulated within glass houses of absolute truths premised upon manufactured lies. It is what is known, what we know to be, what we know to believe. Perhaps now is the time to suspend our beliefs and seek truth in our collective circumstances.

Expelling Identity

The process of socialization is not unique to human beings. It is, in and of itself, neither good nor bad, it simply ‘is’. Socialization is a process to which every living being is subject. It is a cyclical process that begins prior to birth, and continues throughout the course of each individual’s respective lifetime. It is how we develop an understanding of ourselves and our behaviors. It is an integral part towards developing our personal identity, as well as how we identify one another as being members of various groups. The “socialization process is pervasive (coming from all sides and sources), consistent (patterned and predictable), circular (self-supporting), self-perpetuating (intra-dependent) and often invisible (unconscious and unnamed)” (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda,

Hackman, Peters, & Zuniga, 2000, p. 15). Hence, a cycle of socialization is created and sustained for one by all.

For the purposes of this discussion, there are two somewhat similar (by virtue of topic), yet highly differing theories (by virtue of disciplinary underpinnings) related to the process of identity development upon which I will rely, they are: identity theory and social identity theory. The former, identity theory, is based upon sociological tenets and the latter, social identity theory, upon psychological and sociocognitive tenets. “Identity theory may be more effective in dealing with chronic identities and with interpersonal social interaction, while social identity theory may be more useful in exploring inter-group dimensions and in specifying the sociocognitive generative details of identity dynamics” (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 255).

Identity theory asserts that individuals develop social identities based upon the roles they fill within society. “Role identities are self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy, and through a process of labeling or self-definition as a member of a particular social category” (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). For example, I am a school-based speech-language pathologist; a speech therapist, or speech teacher – it is how I identify myself based upon the role I fill within society. Conversely, social identity theory posits the development of social identities by individuals via group affiliation.

A social category (e.g., nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category. Each of these memberships is represented in the individual member’s mind as a social identity that both describes and prescribes one’s attributes as a member of that group –

that is, what one should think and feel, and how one should behave. (Hogg et al., 1995, pp. 259-60)

For example, I am a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) – the foremost authority and governing body for professionals working within the field of communication disorders. This dynamic within the framework of identity development can be further illustrated through a rudimentary analysis of American society.

In postmodern² America, modernist social divides exist and are maintained along a continuum of accepted behavioral normativity. Although multiple broad-based social dynamics exist, such as: majority/minority, pacifists/warriors, able/disabled, etc. any movement between the two prominent groups requires individuals to modify their personal behaviors to ensure they are capable of adapting to new role demands within the context of a new categorical membership.

Our sense of who we are and what we stand for does change and grow over time. But the only way we can invite and embrace change is by being free of group politics, free of pressure, compromise, and threats to think only a certain way, or... for us not to think at all. (Bruce, 2005, p. 216)

As the socializing forces around us constrict our movement, direction, and development over time – we are simply categorized among the rank and file based on our perceived potential as well as actual contributions to a group, the competencies we possess, and our applied value as a group commodity; the implications are potentially staggering.

Becoming a member within a privileged, or dominant, group requires a non-dominant group member to sacrifice his/ her outward association and/or personal affiliation with his /her primary, or non-dominant, group – time honored customs, social behaviors, and

²‘Postmodern’ understood as a philosophical stance whereby interpretation is everything and that “reality only comes in being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually” (www.pbs.org, 2014).

binding traditions are abandon (which are intricately connected with one's sense of self and personal identity) in favor of new, more widely favored standards of customary behavior so as to be more desirable, more acceptable, more aligned with others already located within the fold of the dominant group. If not, you inadvertently sacrifice your ability to compete, achieve, and succeed at a level consistent with said dominant group. Hence, a conflict arises and an identity crisis soon follows – you either 'are', or you 'are not', but you cannot 'be' if you are both/and, because your identity has, on some level, been manufactured; you are the byproduct of your own socialization, and of the social constructs around you – personally and professionally. You are the perpetrator and the victim; the member and the outcast; the oppressor and the oppressed.

Young (as cited in Adams et al., 2000) claims that

oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society...embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules. (p. 36)

Thus, every individual member within a collective social network assumes, knowingly or unknowingly, agency in order to sustain oppressive group practices. For example, in my practice I assess and diagnose individuals with disabling communication impairments so that they may benefit from the opportunity to participate in therapeutic intervention.

While the diagnosis is necessary in order to justify the need for services, the very act of my labeling another with a disabling communication impairment places that individual at a disadvantage among those not identified; they are now Other. Those within a dominant role, despite level of awareness, serve to perpetuate the interests of the majoritarianism. Those in a non-dominant role are forced to acquiesce to the will of the oppressor. Thus,

within the professional bureaucracy "all systems are maintained through the mutually reinforcing interaction of critical systems parts" (Eisler, 1987, p. xxii). Very simply, we are all cogs intricately tied to the status quo functioning of the bureaucratic machine and our individual practices have the power to either maintain the injustice and inequality of the status quo, or to transform it and transcend our socialization – we cannot be both/and.

As a professional, I am the by-product of a very intensive and rigorous academic and clinical education (including a supervised workplace clinical fellowship) in order to procure the ASHA certificate of clinical competence. In addition to the national certification process set forth by ASHA, regulatory licensing bodies at the state level further require the meeting of certain criteria deemed necessary for professional practice (in the state of Illinois we have the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation – IDPR), and state boards of education mandate the completion of additional course-work and basic skills examination in order to meet established qualifications towards obtaining the appropriate certificates to work within the school setting. Furthermore, ASHA, IDPR, and the Illinois State Board of Education enforce strict continuing education policies. Should organization members, license- and/or certificate-holders fall short of the recommended requirements, their ability to practice within the field may be seriously jeopardized. Such is the process of professional induction, and this is how I have come to know and understand my role and responsibilities as a speech-language pathologist (SLP) within society, as well as my role and responsibilities as an ASHA member.

In the field of communication disorders, the induction process is necessary in the creation of successful therapeutic practitioners. It is necessary so that professionals are competent in their abilities to assess, diagnose, and treat/meet the needs of individuals

experiencing the negative effects associated with a disabling communication impairment, as well as to meet the needs of a mechanistic society. My challenge, as a therapeutic practitioner, is to adhere to the guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of the school-based speech-language pathologist (as stipulated by ASHA), and create a balance between my profession's prescribed duties and obligations and my assumed workplace's needs and expectations. It is the epitome of autonomy bound by conformity. To some degree, "society gives professionals greater autonomy than it does other social groups on the assumption that their knowledge is valid and useful, and that they will use it on the behalf of their clients and the public good" (Skrtic, 1995, p. 7), but it is what society gives, and so too society can take away.

When I locate myself within the current framework of regulations and obligations, it is helpful for me to revisit the conceptualization of spheres – not ranked along a continuum, but linked and interconnected to varying degrees based on the commonality of circumstance(s). For example, my SLP sphere is embedded within the greater ASHA sphere. The ASHA sphere is linked to the federal government sphere, and embedded within the federal government sphere are the legislative spheres, etc. Changes in the structure of one, impact the structure of most if not all. Therefore, seemingly incremental changes or modifications in one sphere might potentially impact another sphere exponentially. Professional sovereignty may well be maintained via academic and clinical requirements and codes of ethics, but the influences of other professions and fields upon the sovereign entity directly impact the manner in which those requirements and codes are adhered to by the membership. Governing spheres, or those in a position of power, control the compression and expansion of lesser spheres by enacting legislation

and authorizing regulatory mandates; the ancillary spheres react accordingly. In my experience, as a quasi-autonomous group, SLPs (operating within their highly specialized sphere of influence) are in a unique position. We are both subject to the process of compression, and we compress others through our socialized practices – it is both a blessing and a curse. You see, autonomy is implied given some level of power to impact other, lesser spheres; however, the autonomy is just an illusion. While we have the authority to compress, our induction renders us impotent to expand – which is indeed quite problematic. We are unwitting submissives operating under the assumption of dominance. In the case of improving our professional practices, I contend that it is only by reversing the trend of compression (from the outside in), to one of expansion (from the inside out) that meaningful change can occur – so that we are able to meet our students where they need us, and effectively support them in order to enhance the overall quality of their education through the abundances of successful learning opportunities. “In our continual search for more effective ways to respond to the children we teach, our steady focus must remain on the children...the children can become our best teachers and sources of knowledge” (Hehir & Latus, 1992, p. 428), and our practices can become the culmination of reformation and the inception of transformation.

Detaining Judgment

Given the order of things, it is unfortunately no easy feat to actualize transformation without careful consideration of what society, within reason, will tolerate. As the less reasonable something is perceived, resistance will surely follow; to reform is rational, to transform is radical.

Formerly, unreason was set outside of judgment, to be delivered, arbitrarily, to the powers of reason. Now it is judged, and not only upon entering the asylum,

in order to be recognized, classified, and made innocent forever; it is caught, on the contrary, in a perpetual judgment, which never ceases to pursue it and to apply sanctions, to proclaim its transgressions, to require honorable amends, to exclude, finally, those whose transgressions risk compromising the social order. (Foucault, 1965, pp. 268-269)

The surreptitious imposition of a rational perspective often corrupts, distorts, and dismisses the transcendent perceptions and tacit convictions of a populace existing within a socially constructed reality premised upon positivist ideology. The application of reason upon that which cannot be reconciled (given a collective humanity obligated to the renderings of cultural imperialism) perpetually reinforces stasis along a continuum of aggregated social normativity, and seemingly inexorable social tensions are reified through an ongoing dialogue of struggle – located in the chaos "between reason and unreason" (Foucault, 1965, p. 262), by and among the relegated minority and designated majority – it is seemingly the American way.

American democracy is a seeming hybrid, or amalgam, of both the pluralist (interest-based governance) and majoritarian (majority-rule governance) models. Framed as an androcratic, or male-dominated, meritocracy, democracy functions to self-enforce a perpetual imbalance of empirical authority by denigrating the accommodation of novel paradigms, practices, and alternative conceptual frameworks. The stasis of mechanistic arguments over the dynamism of extemporaneous affirmations is privileged, or upheld as a preferred means of establishing and reinforcing current practices. Thus, the subsequent enactment of equitable pedagogical practices, which enhance the level of student engagement with learning materials, cooperative peer partners/groups, etc. within the classroom setting, is delimited in favor of the employ of archaic instructional

methodologies to the derision of innovative methods designed to meet the learning needs of students as individuals within a collective unit.

As a collective unit, American society operates within a relative standard and cultural framework premised upon the dominator model of social organization. The dominator model is "a way of structuring human relations in which the primary principle of social organization is ranking, beginning with the ranking of one half of humanity over the other" (Eisler, 1990, p. 32). Said model is consistent with a framework designed around masculine values (conquest and domination, hierarchical, authoritarian, and socially violent), aligns with the design of a paternal state premised on patriarchal relationships, and derides feminine values (Eisler, 1987, 2000; Fischer, Hout, Jankowski, Lucas, Swidler, & Voss, 1996; Hart, 2001; Linton, 1998; Seymour, 2004; Wilbur, 2000; Young, 1990). As a cultural framework, the dominator social model is antithetical to the process of transformation or the use of transformative practices in its institutions. As such, the successful assimilation of transformative educational practices into the classroom setting requires a paradigmatic shift. "The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another" (Kuhn, 1962, p. 77) – in this case, we reject the status quo and embrace what can be. In order to reject the dominator social model of organization I contend that we need to accept another model of social organization. In this case, transformation comes through the applied framework of a partnership model of social organization, Per Eisler (1990):

The real alternative to a patriarchal or male-dominant society is not a matriarchy but a *partnership* model of social organization, in which the primary principle of social organization is *linking* rather than ranking. Here - beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species, that between male and female - diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority, and more "feminine" values

such as caring, nonviolence, and compassion can be given operational priority. (p. 32)

We need to develop educational and therapeutic practices that are designed to equitably meet the collective needs of all learners irrespective of perceived learner aptitude - practices designed to adequately meet the collective needs of a society; whereby the attribution of Other could be irrevocably dispelled. According to Lemke (1997):

We need to extend them [the networks of the classroom and the school] outside the networks that define only masculine, heterosexual, middle-class, northwest European cultural values and historical traditions as normative and which seek to deny the already pervasive interpenetration of Other networks and practices into our ecosocial systems. (p. 53)

Therefore, in order to catalyze meaningful change it is necessary that said change must be envisioned and reframed within a context beyond the restrictive boundaries of mechanistic, modern assertions – beyond the “masculine, heterosexual, middle-class, northwest European cultural values and historical traditions as normative” (Lemke, 1997, p. 53) (Danforth & Gabel, 2006; Danziger, 1990; Eisler, 1987, 2000; Fischer et al., 1996; Foucault, 1965, 1970, 1972; Gabel, 2005; Hart, 2001; Seymour, 2004; Skrtic, 1991, 1995; Tremain, 2005).

Retaining the Bureaucracy

I aver that the entrenched paternalistic and heroic notions of what contemporary education is, and to what ends conventional educational practices bring us, must be supplanted in order to ensure that the needs of the collective whole are sufficiently and consistently met. A transformative, paradigmatic shift in the way society thinks about education and educational practices must occur irrespective of members' perceived contributions, gains, or entitlements and must avoid an environment “in which an ideal is celebrated and held up as the way to be, leaving everyone else vulnerable to feeling less

than” (Seymour, 2004, p. 83-84). If we are to stay the course, the rampant social, economic, and political dysfunction of the current education system and the perpetrated ignorance of the professional bureaucracy will remain unhindered – more reform will be touted and more failure will result. According to Skrtic (1991),

The professional bureaucracy is nonadaptable because it is premised on the principle of *standardization*, which configures it as a *performance* organization for *perfecting standard programs*. The adhocracy is premised on the principle of *innovation* rather than standardization; as such, it is a *problem-solving* organization configured to *invent new program*. (p. 182)

For the sake of this discussion, let’s assume that the professional bureaucracy is a sub-sphere of a greater education bureaucracy. Based on Skrtic’s assumptions, regarding a nonadaptable professional bureaucracy, it is reasonable to infer that an education bureaucracy is a collection of convergent thinking/practices which favor standardization (standardized achievement tests), uniformity (common core state standards), and perfection (general education vs. special education). The fore noted is in direct contrast with an education adhocracy, which is premised upon solution-focused divergent thinking/practices which favor creativity and innovation (Skrtic, 1991), such as: inclusion, portfolio assessments, the project approach, the creative curriculum, universal design for learning. Now, given a shift away from an education bureaucracy towards an education adhocracy the nonadaptable professional bureaucracy becomes adaptable – inducted; socialized; constructed to be solution-focused, creative, innovative, and divergent in their collective thinking and practices. In this way, the process of socialization facilitates the development of what we ‘are’, rather than delimiting our growth by reinforcing what we ‘are not’. In this particular instance, the process of compression does not bind other linked, or interconnected, sub-spheres – the boundaries

shrink, but the horizon broadens for everyone. A conceptual shift of this nature (away from an educational bureaucracy towards educational adhocracy) requires only a change in our attitudes and everyday practices. It does not require amending, revising, or reauthorizing of existing policy texts. If anything, this shift has the potential to render the necessity of any formal special education policy null and void. You see, an adhocracy, operating within the framework of a partnership model of social organization by its very nature allows for the development of maximally supportive classroom learning environments. If anything, the ongoing reliance upon special education specific legislation, specific to meeting the needs of those that 'are not', fosters an insidious, unspoken dichotomy of dominant and submissive, and perpetrates the societal attitudes and professional practices which have done little but succeed in marginalizing Others. Hence, operating within a framework of a dominator social model, the policies of an education bureaucracy fails to advance the cause of those it was intended to serve and confirms divisive practices premised upon an assumption of normative acceptability assigned to those behaving within a relative standard of practice.

Bearing in mind the obstacles that are inherent towards cultural transformation (from dominator to partnership), perhaps now is the time for consideration of a universal education proposition in which the learning needs of all students are met in a fair and equitable manner irrespective of "special" needs. It would be an incremental step towards educational transformation with impact despite one's interpretive lens. In being mindful of how we act (attitude) and of what we do (practices) the quality of the connections we make with our students in meeting their needs and supporting their process of learning will be more relevant; the activities more relevant; the networks more relevant; their

success relevant. It would be progressive movement towards establishing and maintaining dynamic spaces of balanced learning; it would be expansion.

Facilitating Meaningful Outcomes

In my opinion, as a society, we have become so enrapt with outcomes, science, process, and methodology that we have ignored our obligation to fairly meet one another's needs in a dignified manner. We have created a world of fear scaffolded upon lies and deceit; a world where we believe that we 'are not'. Professional identities are manufactured to maintain the systemic status quo and individual belief in the necessity of those identities and structures deepens the collective belief of Other. In the case of the professionals working within the field of communication disorders, ASHA developed guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of the school-based SLP in order to explain what the SLP does within the school setting – to justify and substantiate the necessity of the clinical SLP within the non-clinical framework of public education, thus reinforcing the medical model of disability, in a nonmedical context. The well-intended outcomes of the guidelines, which is to “provide guidance for the school-based speech-language pathologist” (ASHA, 2000, p. 249), are recognizable, but the unintended consequences of creating a professional dictum beholden to the constraints of a greater, intolerant system renders it virtually useless towards meeting the needs of the intended beneficiaries of the professionals' practice. SLPs believe in the lie of their necessity, because it validates their presence within the school setting. The school administrators and educators embrace the expertise of the clinician because they, themselves, are at a loss as to how to educate, support, and meet the needs of the Othered who are struggling in their classrooms day-in

and day-out; the students believe that they ‘are not’ because we said so...and their parents believe it, too.

This is not to say that impairment doesn’t exist. As a diagnostician and ancillary medical professional I am well aware that impairments exist (congenital and acquired); however, I am troubled with the pervasive assumption that the presence of impairment automatically implies disability. For example, if someone has a documented visual impairment that is compensated given the use of corrective eyewear they indeed have an impairment (medical model of disability), but they are not disabled by that impairment. If, however, that individual with the visual impairment enters a ‘no corrective eyewear allowed’ zone, then it is the environment that disables the visually impaired individual (social model of disability). You see, sometimes what is disabling an individual has nothing to do with the presence of an impairment, but everything to do with the rituals practiced by individuals that were enacted and perpetrated by discriminatory, or in other words, ableist, policies. In a social model of disability, disabling impairment is no longer located within an individual, but lays within the social structures (attitudes, practices, and environments) and institutional systems (policies and procedures) surrounding an individual with impairment. The entrenched attitudes and practices of a system’s people (duly located in restrictive environments) are simply a consequence of what they have come to know and accept because that is the way that things have been done, for “to do anything else...would not make sense.

From this perspective, “teaching is a ritualized activity that takes place in an institutional environment” (Skrtic, 1991, p. 176); it is what we are taught, what we know to be, and what we know to believe reinforced by policies and procedures designed to

justify delimiting attitudes, practices, and environments, as “professional behavior in schools is governed more by institutionalized cultural norms than it is by rational, knowledge-based actions designed to improve instructional effectiveness” (p. 176). So, knowing this, living this, understanding this I find myself in crisis – located within the tension between the power of knowledge and the knowledge to empower.

In this crisis, I find I am no longer able to rectify in my mind that which prevailing professional attitudes and practices concede. As a practicing professional, prior to continuing my education in pursuit of a doctoral degree, the only questions I ever thought to ask were those related to ensuring that I was following established procedures properly. I never once thought to wonder as to whether or not those procedures were contributing to the oppression and marginalization of Others. Those were the rules that were in place, and as a professional it was my job and responsibility to adhere to those guidelines. I was taught to believe that what I was doing was for the good of Others... I was a helping professional; now I am not so sure. I had been conditioned to think that what exists must be good/right, and anything counter to the narrative of “the way things are” must be bad/wrong. I just assumed that the current model of special education was the best model – I never thought to question it otherwise. You see, now I understand that, despite my best intentions, there are consequences associated with being identified with a communication impairment.

The consequences of identification and enrollment into special education programming automatically modifies a teacher’s envisage regarding a child’s potential academic success. In coming to terms with the fore noted, I now acknowledge that it is my clinical diagnosis that acts as a catalyst for the potential discrimination against the

students I strive to serve and help. The prevailing attitudes, practices, and environments disable the child, not necessarily the presence of a child's impairment. Even so, as a professional I am beholden to a system of policies and procedures developed within a framework of distributive justice that requires me to justify and substantiate needs based on deficit. I am a clinical by-product of society's adherence to the medical model of disability. I am an educational by-product of professional induction. My students are the by-products of an intolerant society premised on prejudicial policies and procedures (reinforced by governmental funding/resources and social service programs). I find myself unable to reconcile the notion that good works can come from attitudes and practices entrenched within, and beholden to, the system, or structure, rather than those for whom the practices were supposed to benefit. I now see that my efforts toward justifying my professional roles and responsibilities within the oppressive framework of a deficit-driven social construct are futile; I cannot justify the unjustifiable and given this newfound understanding I am left, in crisis, pondering in what ways this knowledge impacts my future course. According to existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre:

We have a past. Of course we have been able to establish that this past does not determine our acts as a prior phenomenon determines a consequent phenomenon; we have shown that the past is without force to constitute the present and to sketch out the future. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the freedom which escapes toward the future cannot give itself any past it likes according to its fancy; there are even more compelling reasons for the fact that it cannot produce itself without a past. It has to be its own past, and the past is irremediable. (Sartre, 1956, p. 637)

Existing in this presence, despite my knowledge and futility, it is to the future I turn with hope – a hope that is destined to be its own past, present, and future; not that we can change what has been done...what we have done, but that we can change our current attitudes and contemporary practices towards ensuring equitable outcomes for all. From

compression to expansion, it is my hope that evolving attitudes and practices will have the power to link professions with contexts and partner professionals with society – to catalyze the actualization of transdisciplinary roles and responsibilities; to revolutionize. Kuhn (1962) states that "a revolution is for me a special sort of change involving a certain sort of reconstruction of group commitments" (pp. 180-181). I have faith that if we, as a collective group, are united in our commitment to the process of redefining student success beyond the stasis of academic achievement and functional performance (what we 'are not') toward the dynamism of curricular responsiveness and the skill expectancy (what we 'are'), and envisioning the promise of what can exist by ameliorating the policies and practices of educational injustice, then we can ensure that the diverse learning needs of all school-aged children are effectively met.

In the process of constructing our new reality, various disciplines must be willing to engage in an *ongoing dialogue* (Skrtic, 1995), critical discourses, towards a meaningful exchange of ideas and generation of solutions that can potentially create the kind of foundation needed toward securing lasting educational transformation; securing the future for children so they have the opportunity to: effectively relate with one another; actively participate and contribute within their respective community; proficiently use language, symbols, and texts to convey and share information; critically think about the world around them; and, to satisfactorily manage their respective needs in a diverse society (Hipkins, 2006). We need to "stop thinking in terms of limitations and start thinking in terms of possibilities" (Josephson, 2012). An adhocratic system of education honors/empowers professionals and students as capable, valued, contributing members –

it is a step towards the actualization of limitless possibilities; a purposeful movement away from oppressive practices.

As I attempt to understand the impact of cultural or social phenomena, from a macro perspective, it becomes necessary to examine those phenomena as occurring within the context of an interrelated network/structure of relationships, or system. Structuralist theories address dynamics and relationships within organizations (Pfeffer, 1982; Scott, 1981, as cited in Skrtic, 1995). Radical structuralist theories question the integrity of assumed relationships within society (premised upon consensus and shared values) and are critical of unequal power relationships (Tomlinson, as cited in Skrtic, 1995). As a radical structuralist it is my intent to endeavor a thorough examination of the multifarious relationships that seemingly act to prohibit meaningful, progressive change within the field of special education. Per Tomlinson (1995),

Structuralist perspectives are unpopular in special education; they suggest ways of looking at events and practices that are often uncomfortable for professionals and administrators. But, by moving to levels of structural analysis, it becomes possible to ask broader questions about the aims, forms, and ideologies in special education, and thus to work toward positive change. (p. 132)

In addition to my structuralist viewpoint I will also frame my arguments and substantiate my assertions from a disabilities studies perspective. According to the Disability Studies in Education (DSE) special interest group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), “disabilities studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field of scholarship that critically examines issues related to the dynamic interplays between disability and various aspects of culture and society” (Gabel, 2005, p. 1). By critically addressing factors which contribute to the systematic devaluation of students experiencing disabling impairments – further disabled by the social, political and

economic imbalances which exist within a heroic majoritarianism, I hope to supplant the naïve pragmatism of contemporary education with maximally supportive classroom learning environments.

Purpose Statement

The purposes of this thesis are: to examine the manifestation of mechanistic ideations and assertions (consistent with a heroic culture³) within education; and, to provide an in-depth analysis of systemic factors that serve to perpetrate exclusive pedagogical discourses and inequitable classroom-based practices. To achieve my stated purposes, the following questions will be thoughtfully considered throughout the course of my research as a means of divining insight toward reconciling the proliferation of systemic, educational incongruities in the United States of America:

1. In what ways are the mechanistic ideations and assertions, associated with and valued within a heroic culture, reinforced by contemporary education practices?
2. What socialized beliefs contribute to potentially disabling practices within the educational setting?
3. What systemic modifications: a.) mitigate potentially disabling practices within education, and b.) are necessary toward catalyzing a paradigmatic shift in the field?

It is my every hope, as an outcome of my research that all students can aspire to endeavor to pursue their respective learning interests, as well as access instructional environments that provide maximally supportive learning opportunities. Additionally, I

³‘Heroic culture’ understood as a culture given to the unquestioned acceptance of ideals, beliefs, and practices touted by the majority/majority leadership within a social network whereby any other counter perspective/voice/narrative is discredited as wrong, heretical, and/or villainous (Seymour, 2004).

hope to inspire educators to facilitate functional interdependence conscientiously among their students, their students' families, and the community at-large toward effecting long-lasting, positive, social and educational transformation.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.

– Anais Nin

Fear is a loathsome thing. It is the great inhibitor of change; the bane of progress. It is the advocate of rational suppositions, the forced imposition of accepting things as they are simply because that is the way of the world, and the denier of Other – fear drives the superfluous dismissal of possibilities beyond the stasis of what is known to be. I yearn for such things as dynamism and expectancy, and I can no longer abide the mechanistic assertions that contribute to the culture of standardization and fear mongering within the field of education.

Toward the summative end of meeting the diverse learning needs of all school-aged children, it is my sense that meaningful, systemic changes must incorporate the following: educational opportunities should empower students in their respective pursuits of learning; instructional environments must be designed to provide maximally supportive learning opportunities; education professionals need to consistently and appropriately provide effective strategies of differentiation in both their instruction, as well as in their assessments; and, there must be a conscientious facilitation of interdependence among students, adults, and the community at-large.

In my process of questioning what systemic modifications are necessary toward catalyzing a paradigmatic shift in education, I have identified three specific factors that seemingly act to prohibit progressive movement within the field. The prohibitory factors are as follows: legislating special education specific policies fosters and perpetuates a primary divergence within education; privileging a certain type of intelligence delimits

the possibilities toward valuing multiple ways of creating meaning and knowing the world; and, embracing practices premised upon the assumptions of a medical model renders a manifestation of disability located solely within the individual. Furthermore, the proffered itinerant role of helping professionals, given an imbued professional bureaucracy, has become a self-serving enterprise designed to reinforce the normative status quo (Danforth, 2006; Skrtic, 1990). According to Young (1990): “The conscious actions of many individuals daily contribute to maintaining and reproducing oppression, but those people are usually simply doing their jobs or living their lives, and do not understand themselves as agents of oppression” (pp. 41-42).

Indeed, it is seemingly the reinforcement of establishment ideology by and large among organizations and practitioners working within education that disallows the enactment of progressive practices consistent with a framework premised upon the fundamental tenets associated with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Perhaps, progressive social and educational transformation within the United States of America would be possible were the previously identified issues satisfactorily resolved.

Education Estranged

Forty years ago, this nation’s well-intended legislators authorized the passage of Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act). Given subsequent reauthorizations, PL. 94-142 is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The policy denotes four key purposes: to provide a free and appropriate public education to children with identified disabilities (including specialized instruction to meet their individual needs); to protect the rights of identified students and their parents; to provide financial support to education agencies meeting the needs of said

students; and, to monitor the effectiveness of educational efforts to meet the needs of the students (108th Congress, 2004).

While countless numbers of children and adults have benefitted from the fore noted legislation, one particular unintended consequence, related to the law, is the formalized split, or divergence, between regular education and special education. At issue is the disabling/dis-integration of impaired-identified students within the general education setting secondary to inadequate curricular access (Brantlinger, 2005; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Matua & Smith, 2006). Further complicating matters, is the interpretation and impact of policy on education as it exists within the construct of a heroic culture (Seymour, 2004) premised upon a dominator model of society (Eisler, 1990).

According to Matua and Smith (2006), "The IEP [individualized education plan], meant to elaborate the support and services the [disabled] student needs, is also a vehicle by which the school can marginalize and segregate the student by defining a restrictive environment as "least restrictive" (p. 127). The implication is clear, that while unintended, the enactment of a special education specific policy allows for the justified segregation/marginalization of students with identified disabilities/disabling impairments insofar as it serves to dis-integrate the learning opportunities and experiences of a child identified as eligible for special education and/or related services. Consequently, under the guise of law, while many children with disabling impairments are able to access the physical structure of a school building said access to the building does not necessarily afford them access to curricular content; the outcomes far from educationally equitable (Michaels, 2006) The fore noted sentiment is consistent with Ellen Brantlinger's thoughts on pedagogy in special education whereby, despite the existence of mandates, special

education programming has failed to yield the kinds of academic achievement and functional performance gains in students that were originally hoped for, as slowing down/dummying-down a general education curriculum simply is not enough to ensure that identified students meet their potential and succeed. Per Brantlinger (2005):

Special education has been billed as a remedial service that helps deficient students become normal (i.e., achieve at a level commensurate with group norms). Its philosophy has been "meeting diverse learning needs... specialized remedial approaches have been designed and used for certain types of "special needs". However, these methods inevitably are variations of general education pedagogical techniques, and, their popularity waxes and wanes, but it is almost always short-lived. It is more typical for the curriculum in special education classrooms to be watered- or dummied-down versions of the mainstream curriculum. (p. 127)

Thus, despite legislators' efforts towards guaranteeing identified children a free and appropriate public education (in the least restrictive environment where the greatest amount of academic and functional gains can be made), the lack of financial/human resources, ineffective pedagogical techniques/inflexible educational framework, as well as limited student accessibility to quality curricular materials has failed to create the kind of high quality learning opportunities critical toward developing/meeting each child's potential to the fullest extent. Though unintentional, it is clear - being identified as a special education student is synonymous with being identified as Other.

Answering the call for innovation was the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). Founded by a group of educators in 1984, CAST set out to develop a framework for learning that made curricular content accessible for all students. Hence, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was created. Enacting meaningful, progressive, systemic change increases exponentially were the current policy interpreted within the context of a progressive (dynamic) framework, or simply abandoned. Even if the operating

framework and bureaucracy remained intact, a simple modification of the language contained within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) text to more adequately reflect and meet contemporary society's educational needs, interdependence could potentially supplant independence and least restrictive could possibly manifest as most supportive. In that case, schools would move toward substantially meeting the end of providing all children a free and appropriate public education in the most supportive environment in which the greatest amount of educational gains could be made. Per Lemke (1997):

We learn in activities, but more fully in networks of activities which are interdependent on one another, which facilitate and enable one another, which are marked out as being relevant to understanding each other's meanings. These networks are constructed differently by different groups, and to some extent by different individuals, not only in what we say are relevant connections, but what we make be relevant connections by how we act and what we do, and sometimes by the very fact of our lives' bridging these networks together. (p. 51)

Special education legislation initially built a bridge of structural accessibility to individuals previously underserved in education; however, it has done little to bridge the equity divide bordering the abyss of curricular themes and content (i.e., a maximally supportive classroom learning environment given the use of: modified instructional language and facilitative instructional supports; extensive curricular responsiveness - implementation of alternative instructional and assessment formats across all subject areas; reimagined student expectancy beyond a specific, privileged, skill set; reallocated human resources; and, restructured therapeutic supports/personnel, etc.).

Intelligence Privileged

Traditional conventions associated with contemporary education practices privilege logical-mathematical intelligence. I contend that the privileging of a narrowly

defined intelligence, consistent with the work of Charles Spearman and Alfred Binet (Jensen, 2006) further reinforces not only the dominator model of society, but antiquated notions touted by modern-day eugenicists, as well. The former evidenced by the enactment of education legislation that prioritizes competitive learning and accountability measures via high-stakes standardized assessments. The latter as evidenced by the expectation that human learning potential will evolve, as opposed to the practices that educators employ to ensure that student learning occurs irrespective of individual potential.

Indeed, behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner (1971) remarked, “what *evolve* are practices” (p. 33). If the focus in education were on the evolution of practices – consistent with Skrtic’s (1991) vision of an adhocracy, then “the institution of public education cannot be democratic unless its practices are excellent *and* equitable. In organizational terms, its practices cannot be excellent and equitable unless school organizations are adhocratic” (p. 199), as opposed to the evolution of a certain kind of specified human learning competence, the need for learning standardization becomes moot. Each child would have the benefit of coming to know, and understanding the world in unique ways irrespective of a singular intelligence, given the benefit of improving teaching methods and resources with the valuation of many kinds of developing intelligences/competencies.

Piaget (2000) defined intelligence as “an equilibration between assimilation and accommodation” (p. 58). I agree, but expand the notion of assimilation and accommodation beyond the constructed, privileged, parameters of logical-mathematical intelligence, into a realm consistent with intelligence as a product of a cognitive system more akin to Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (verbal-linguistic,

logical-mathematical, spatial-visual, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, existential) and Robert Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (analytical/componential, practical/contextual, creative/experiential) given skills acquisition and development consistent with Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (where skills acquisition takes place between the space of independence and incompetence, located in a frame of facilitated interdependence).

As a means of redefining intelligence beyond the framework of a traditional understanding, Gardner (1983) developed his theory of multiple intelligences. He qualified intelligence, or abilities, not as traits of one's personality, but as aptitudes and skill sets that every individual possesses to a variable degree. Thus, every individual's skill set contributed to what makes them intelligent. Gardner initially proposed a set of seven intelligences with an additional two later included. Per Thirteen ed online, 2004 they are:

1. Verbal-linguistic intelligence (well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and rhythms of words)
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence (ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns)
3. Spatial-visual intelligence (capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly)
4. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully)
5. Musical intelligences (ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timber)
6. Interpersonal intelligence (capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others)
7. Intrapersonal (capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes)
8. Naturalist intelligence (ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals and other objects in nature)
9. Existential intelligence (sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence such as, 'What is the meaning of life?' 'Why do we die?', 'How did we get here?')

As there are multiple ways of knowing, understanding, and experiencing the world it only stands to reason that there too must be multiple competencies, or aptitudes, upon which each individual relies in order to make meaningful the process of learning. Gardner's seminal work provided a foundation towards reimagining not only what intelligence and ability are, but how individuals each possess a unique cognitive profile. In a 1995 follow up of his work, Gardner addressed several criticisms of his theory, and offered additional ways that multiple intelligences theory has been successfully used within the educational setting, specifically: the cultivation of desired capabilities; approaching a concept, subject matter, or discipline in a variety of ways; and, the personalization of education. It is my sense that to dismiss his work, as his critics have summarily done – secondary to complaints regarding: a lack of empirical, psychometric assessment measures; the confusion between learning style and intelligence as a capacity; the neutrality of heritability of intelligence; and, the rejection of intelligence as conceptualized along the bell curve, serves to further discredit the variable talents and abilities innate to all human beings thereby sustaining, perpetuating, and privileging a single type of measureable intelligence. "Gardner argues that by calling linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities intelligences, but not artistic, musical, athletic, etc. abilities, the former are needlessly aggrandized" (Shekhar, 2014, p. 35). As individuals, if we are as a whole greater than the sum of our parts, then it stands to reason that individual achievement cannot be solely based upon one singular aspect of our being. As a group, if we are only as strong as our weakest link, then we must reimagine and reframe the context of our personal bias in order to ensure the success of all participants.

Redefining intelligence – as a byproduct of the mind’s systemic, cognitive machinations, was further posited by Robert Sternberg (1985). Sternberg defined intelligence as a “mental activity directed toward purposive adaptation to selection and shaping of, real-world environments relevant to one’s life” (p. 45). In his Triarchic theory of intelligence, Sternberg posited that cognition and intelligence can be compartmentalized into three specific components: metacomponents, performance components, and knowledge-acquisition components. Similar to Gardner’s work, Sternberg sought to reimagine intelligence beyond the stasis of a skill specific aptitude into the dynamic interplay of how analytical/componential, practical/contextual, and creative/experiential abilities shape how we come to understand and engage with the world around us. Less radical than Gardner, Sternberg adhered to traditionally held tenets of positivism while developing his theory as well as associated assessments/research behind his position. Many pedagogical intervention studies, across grade levels and subject matter, have been conducted in U.S. schools based on Sternberg’s Triarchic theory. Said purpose of those research studies was in order to “demonstrate the value of multiple pedagogical approaches that ensure all children are taught in ways that challenge and develop their analytical, practical, and creative abilities” (Grigorenko, 2009, p. 3). Whereas Gardner’s work looked at the discrete skills that manifest intelligence in the individual, Sternberg analyzed the structure whereby an individual’s intelligence(s) might flourish. The broad findings of research studies conducted on the merits of Triarchic-based teaching have shown student improvement in the areas of thinking analytically, creatively, and practically, and additionally improved student performance on standardized assessments. Furthermore, per Grigorenko:

Sternberg's theory has three major implications for educational psychology. First, teaching for all types of intelligence is important because students need to capitalize on their strongest abilities at the same time they work to develop the abilities in which they demonstrate weaknesses. Second, students' strongest abilities are directly connected to their most amenable learning styles. Teachers should know the learning preferences of their students and, when possible, capitalize on them. Third, because these variable abilities exist there should be many diverse assessments of school achievement, not only those that focus on traditional analytical abilities (p. 5).

Thus, by reimagining intelligence and employing innovative pedagogical techniques that honor students' learning competencies and their respective learning styles, irrespective of curricular content, educators can provide a sound basis for their students' increased desire for, and achievement in, life-long learning pursuits; a deliberate movement away from privileging a singular type of intelligence towards understanding and honoring students' broad aptitudes and abilities. Whereby all parties involved with the task of educating children would value each child's varied learning aptitudes further cultivating the development of said child's associated skills and interests through the manipulation of learning tools and participation in multiple, collaborative learning experiences given varying levels of participation and responsibilities. Thus, every student would have the chance to hone their respective strengths, as well as develop their lesser-employed learning talents.

Sadly, the pervasive overuse of psychometric assessments in education in order to qualify/quantify an intelligence renders little toward the enactment of progressive education initiatives beyond the habituated professional bureaucracy. The continuation of the aforementioned overreliance on psychometric measures as a means of qualifying/quantifying the learning potential of America's youth is seemingly antithetical towards innovative progress in meeting the needs of today's students. As such, the many who find

themselves labeled and cast outside of the traditional learning community of practice (Lemke, 1997) are written off as intelligence deficient, despite their skills in other, lesser valued, areas of intelligence.

Current traditions find fault in the individual, as opposed to the structures in which the individual must learn to exist – and must exist to learn. In my opinion, the field of human development would do well to further investigate and update an expanded version of Piaget's thoughts regarding personal/cultural assimilation and environmental/structural accommodation. In doing so, perhaps archaic notions of standardized human behavior, development, and aptitude might well find their appropriate place among other relics of discarded science.

Ignored Common Sense

As with many of the social sciences, the field of psychology borrowed heavily from the field of medicine in its development of normative and standardized developmental profiles (Danziger, 1990). In doing so it further reinforced what is commonly referred to as the medical model of disability. The medical model/medicalization of disability locate deficiency in the individual as opposed to the structures around them that contribute to their difficulties irrespective of impairment (Danforth, 2006; Gabel, 2006; Hughes, 2005; Matua & Smith, 2006; Waldschmidt, 2005). The field of education concurrently/subsequently adopted much of what the field of psychology was developing in order to establish “assembly-line” education models. “Barriers to learning are not, in fact, inherent in the capacities of learners, but instead arise in learners’ interactions with inflexible education materials and methods” (Rose & Meyer, 2002, p. vi). By dehumanizing educators and students via one-size-fits-all

curricula the failure of any given student to learn what has been deemed important falls with that particular one, as opposed to the failing of the standardized method/classroom learning environment.

No Child Left Behind, Response to Intervention, Common Core State Standards, and IDEIA further reinforce the notion that there are proven methods of teaching by which all children can and should learn. I am not discarding the fundamental idea that schools must be held accountable in meeting the learning needs of its students. What I am rejecting is the notion that teaching practices premised upon the science of psychology – grounded in medical objectivity and science – will meet the diverse needs of all learners. By solely locating a child's learning potential to the self, the failure of a system's structure can be largely ignored.

As long as the field of education continues to subscribe to the tenets purported by the field of psychology, as influenced by the field of medicine, its teachers and related services providers/therapeutic support personnel will continue to find fault with the identified student, as opposed to the school setting and teaching methods/practices. "Successful schools in the twenty-first century will be those that produce cultivated citizens – liberally educated young people who can live and work responsibly and interdependently under conditions of uncertainty" (Skrtic, 1995, p. 259). I aver that the divergence within education (between regular education and special education) is insidiously reinforced by the reliance upon the presence of a formal, qualifying diagnosis and the provision of services based solely on the presence of an observable sequellae associated with an impairment. It occurs to me that cultivating citizens has much more to do with tilling and fertilizing the soil from whence the citizenry are to develop and

flourish, as opposed to continually faulting the seeds planted in a barren, burned-out, forgotten plain.

As I have alluded to, re/habilitative services within the school setting require the allocation of a specified amount of time to address discrete goals given an accepted standard of traditional, itinerant service delivery models. Procuring said services in order to support an identified student currently requires (per IDEIA) that the deficiency be located in the child (given an eligibility determination) and not necessarily in the classroom setting, teacher, curricular materials, etc. Per Danforth (2006):

By focusing on concerns of individual dysfunction and goals of increasing functionality, the field has rarely raised its eyes to question the pervasive social structures and processes that capture specific forms of biological and cultural difference within social conditions of economic poverty and community exclusion. (p. 86)

As such, receiving therapy services within the school setting does not necessarily guarantee improved learning outcomes for identified students. In fact, it (IDEIA) only guarantees that students will have access to specialized intervention if their respective impairments negatively impact their aggregated educational performance. By ignoring the extraneous factors that effect a child's academic achievement much of what practitioners provide is but a band-aid on a deep, festering wound; the child's noticeable impairments are attended to and concealed, but the extraneous factors that continually contribute to the student's school failure are largely ignored and left to continually plague the child's potential future learning opportunities.

As a school-based therapeutic practitioner, I provide services to identified students via one-to-one, in small groups, and in large groups. In my experience, irrespective of service delivery model or combination thereof, my students have generally

fared well within the regular education setting given the appropriate classroom-based supports and learning structure. What has changed in my practice as time has passed is not the amount of direct service time I spend with identified students, but the time I spend consulting with the teachers.

Historically, the primary role of the school-based speech-language pathologist (SLP) was to make sure that qualifying children were able to comprehend and convey information within the educational setting. While the fore noted remains consistent with accepted best practices (per the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association – ASHA), it is my sense that SLPs can and should work toward altering their traditional, comprehensive, service delivery model. By doing so, SLPs (acting more as communication facilitators) will not only meet the needs of qualifying students, but will meet the language-based education and communication needs of all students.

Furthermore, the possibility of greater amounts of collaboration by and among the SLPs with classroom teachers and associated classroom staff would likely facilitate a more meaningful learning process for all members (including students) within an actively engaged classroom's/school's learning community. Continuing along the course upon which we have been set (via over-relying upon psychometric assessments, locating disability within the individual, and failing to question the integrity of the systems and organizations that define/guide our therapeutic practice) will only serve to further perpetuate therapeutic failure in the schools (Ferguson, 2002). It is only by transforming our professional practices that we can truly hope to meet the needs of the students we strive to teach. “Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 65).

Avocado Tree

Even an avocado tree
Longs to be free.
In its white plastic tub
Its slender green stem
Bends toward the window
Its leaves grow all on one side
Its whole body twists and strains.
From some distant past each cell remembers
Sunlight flowing freely all around
A warmth that moved slowly to bathe
One side at morning
The other at evening.
In its watered pot its green soul dimly aches
For gentle drops of rain
Splashing on its leaves.
People see its struggle and say
Heliotropism

Spring 1972

– Dohrn, Ayers, & Jones, 2006, p. 112)

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Towards the outcome of creating meaningful, sustainable, cumulative change within the confines of any given organizational system, it is imperative to address and interrogate the harbingers of disjuncture, or impediments to change, in order to facilitate success. “The necessity for environmental access, inescapable interdependence, inherent expansiveness, temporal constraint, and a variability of behavior with indeterminate limits” (Hawley, 1986, p. 125), as in human ecology, are defining traits not ascribed to the individual, but to the greater collective. Hence, research into system properties and structural/organizational integrity “commits the point of view to a macrolevel (sic) approach” (p. 126).

To further investigate organizational integrity within the field of education, it is necessary to employ a means of inquiry that examines broader societal trends. Furthermore, the tool employed within a macro-level approach must mine data that substantiates and/or negates the assertions of the research being conducted. In doing so, said data then serve as the foundation for meaningful interpretation. Through the process of data analysis, both statistical and interpretive, a thorough examination into the impact of systemic incongruities and those mechanisms that serve to privilege some practices over others then becomes possible. In analyzing the data, I aspire to look at the dynamics of the relationships located within the system, as well as develop a greater understanding and awareness of those dynamics in context. As a radical structuralist, critical theorist, feminist, and human ecologist my interpretation and impressions of the statistical data will be biased based on my philosophical assumptions. Per Denzin and Lincoln (2003),

Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand, it is drawn to a broad, interpretive, postexperimental, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly defined positivist, postpositivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis. Further, these tensions can be combined in the same project, bringing both postmodern and naturalistic or both critical and humanistic perspectives to bear. (p. 11)

By creating and enacting a study based in qualitative research methods, it becomes possible to examine tensions within the framework of the content being studied, thereby expanding our understanding of relationships in the process of meaning-making.

Interpretive practice engages both the *hows* and the *whats* of social reality; it is centered both in how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that inform and shape their reality-constituting activity. (Gubrium & Holstein, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, p. 215)

It is my sense that, as our understanding of relationships and practices is increased, so too, is the possibility for long-lasting, sustainable changes within a given system over time.

Respondents

For the purposes of this study, a combined sample total of 5,725 certified educators/administrators (elementary and/or secondary), as well as paraprofessionals (program, classroom, and/or individual assistants) in various suburban school settings were solicited for their voluntary participation in the completion of an online survey (see Appendices A and B).

Of the 20 suburban school districts solicited for survey participants, given a reported total of 5,725 potential respondents, a total of 105 individuals completed the initial demographic components of the survey yielding a 1.83% rate of response (see Table 1). Additionally, of the 33 survey content questions, an average of 97 participants

completed all questions yielding a 92% rate of response. Questions specific to policy, intelligence, and medicalization yielded 92%, 92%, and 91% rates of response respectively. Of the 105 participants, approximately 93% identified as female and 7% identified as male (see Table 2).

Table 1

Survey Response Rate

	Total Number of Participants	Mean Number of Respondents	Total Percentage of Sample
Demographic Questions (7):	5,725	105	1.83%
Total Content Questions (33):	105	97	92%
Policy Questions (11):	105	97	92%
Intelligence Questions (11):	105	97	92%
Medicalization Questions (11):	105	96	91%

Table 2

Demographic Information – Gender

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
Female:	98	93.33%
Male:	7	6.67%

Furthermore, of the survey respondents, 76% of survey respondents fell within a range of 30-59 years of age (see Table 3); 76% attained an educational degree at a masters level or beyond (see Table 4); and, approximately 69% reported working within an elementary setting; however, many respondents indicated working across multiple settings and were not limited to a single setting. The reason for this discrepancy is likely attributed to the number of ancillary medical professionals (occupational therapists,

speech-language pathologists, nurses, etc.) and school-based specialists (psychologists, social workers, learning behavior specialists, etc.) participating in the study (see Table 6). Irrespective, all participants were employed, in one of the fore noted capacities, within an elementary or secondary school building serving the following populations: general education and/or special education students in grade levels ranging from preschool through twelfth grade (see Table 5).

Table 3

Demographic Information – Age

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
20-29:	11	10.48%
30-39:	31	29.52%
40-49:	17	16.19%
50-59:	32	30.48%
60-69:	14	13.33%
70-79:	0	0.00

Table 4

Demographic Information – Level of Education

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
Associates:	2	1.9%
Bachelors:	13	12.38%
Masters:	76	72.38%
Doctorate:	4	3.81%
Post-Doctorate:	1	0.95%
Other:	9	8.57%

Table 5

Demographic Information – Setting

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
Elementary:	72	68.57%
Middle:	37	35.24%
Secondary:	10	9.52%
Other:	19	18.1%

As previously noted, approximately 72% of respondents identified as either a special educator or specialist working within the educational setting (see Table 6). Also, 73% of all respondents reported working within an educational setting for 10 or more years (see Table 7).

Table 6

Demographic Information – Professional Role

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
General Educator:	14	13.46%
Special Educator:	30	28.85%
Administrator:	7	6.73%
Paraprofessional:	8	7.69%
Other (specialists):	45	43.27%

Table 7

Demographic Information – Years of Experience

	Total Number of Participants	Total Percentage of Sample
0-4:	14	13.33%
5-9:	14	13.33%
10-19:	38	36.19%
20-29:	28	26.67%
30-39:	8	7.62%
40-49:	3	2.86%

This survey, developed in order to elicit participants' attitudes and opinions regarding relatively common topics within the field of education is comprised of 33 statements situated on a five-point Likert scale (see Appendix B). Per Vogt (2005), the Likert scale is:

A widely used questionnaire format developed by R. Likert. Respondents are given statements and asked to respond by saying whether they "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." Wording varies considerably; for example. People might be asked if they "totally approve," "approve somewhat," and so on. Likert scales and Likert-like scales, are the most widely used attitude scale types in the social sciences. They are comparatively easy to construct, can deal with attitudes of more than one dimension, and tend to have high reliabilities. (pp. 174-175)

For this particular survey, statement disagreement was identified at 1 or 2 points; statement agreement was identified at 4 or 5 points; and, a neutral response, or one that evokes no opinion, was identified at 3 points.

The surveys were individually distributed, via email, and participants were provided no less than a three month period of time for completion/submission. The participants were provided with written instructions on appropriate survey completion, and were to indicate their position on the various survey statements, as they applied to them, in a manner as honest and truthful as possible. The survey was closed to additional respondents prior to data analysis. A written reassurance was provided to all participants regarding the use of the information obtained from the survey analysis used for the purposes of this particular research study and any potential, associated, future publication expressly related to this area of inquiry. As the study was based on a self-administered survey approach, it was the responsibility of each individual rater to submit the completed online survey for the researcher. For the purposes of data analysis, frequencies of mean, median, and range (yielding standard deviation) were analyzed in an effort to

establish general trends in educators' opinions regarding potentially disabling barriers in education specific to the areas of: policy (as it relates back to systemic modifications that act to mitigate and/or catalyze potentially disabling practices and/or a paradigmatic shift within the field of education; intelligence (as it relates back to the reinforcement of contemporary education practices by mechanistic ideations and assertions associated with and valued within a heroic culture); and, medicalization (as it relates back to socialized beliefs substantiating disabling practices within the educational setting).

In addition to the survey data, face-to-face follow-up interviews- in order to illustrate general trends in educators' thoughts/attitudes were conducted with five select survey participants. Interview participants were selected based upon their dissenting opinions and/or critical insights potentially shared in the additional comments section of the survey, and/or their role and/or responsibilities within the field of education. Non-compromising interviewee descriptions are as follows:

- Interviewee 1 is a female, special educator with a bachelor's level of education. She is currently working in a high school setting and has over 20 years of professional experience;
- Interviewee 2 is a female, general educator with a bachelor's level of education. She is currently working in an elementary setting and has over 10 years of professional experience;
- Interviewee 3 is a male, administrator with a master's level of education. He is currently working in a middle school setting and has over 10 years of professional experience;

- Interviewee 4 is a female, related services provider with a master's level of education. She is currently working in elementary and middle school settings and has less than 5 years of professional experience; and,
- Interviewee 5 is a male, paraprofessional with a bachelor's level of education. He is currently working in a middle school setting and has over 10 years of professional experience.

The completed interviews provided this researcher with another means towards understanding the unique impact of educators' training and professional experiences specific to, as well as their perspectives regarding, facilitating student success. The duration of each interview was no less than 16 minutes and no greater than 57 minutes. The interview consent and guiding questions can be found in Appendices C and D; the complete interview transcripts, of all five sessions, can be found in Appendices E-I.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings

In order to examine the manifestation of mechanistic ideations and assertions (consistent with a heroic culture) within education effectively; and, to provide an in-depth analysis of systemic factors that serve to perpetrate exclusive pedagogical discourses and inequitable classroom-based practices, it is necessary to thoughtfully consider:

1. Which systemic modifications mitigate potentially disabling practices within education, as well as catalyze a paradigmatic shift in the field (related to policy);
2. What contemporary education practices are reinforced by mechanistic ideations and assertions associated with and valued within a heroic culture (related to intelligence); and,
3. How disabling practices within the educational setting are substantiated by socialized beliefs (related to medicalization).

As a means of addressing the fore noted issues, I have arranged my narrative analysis/impressions and descriptive statistics into three primary categories specific to the matters of: policy, intelligence, and medicalization. Each section will include a brief summary of category-specific findings, additional supporting details from the interviews, as well as the numeric results derived from the survey analysis. The survey responses were analyzed in an effort to establish general trends in educators' opinions regarding potentially disabling barriers in education specific to the areas of: policy; intelligence; and, medicalization (see Tables 8-10). There were no areas of statistical significance indicated- as the survey respondent rate was low, specific to the results obtained

regarding: the relationships between and among the respondents' respective professions (administrators, teachers, school-based therapeutic practitioners, paraprofessionals); the number of years the respondents have been working in education (novice, experienced); and, the ranking of individual statements specific to role served by the participant (administrator, educator), as such I included all responses in a single table.

Policing Policy

The scores obtained from the survey yielded the following trends: questions related to actual policy and current initiatives generally rendered a neutral to somewhat favorable response; however, respondents' views of legislators' policy aims and their understanding of program implementation was markedly unfavorable; scores pertaining to the purpose and implementation of individualized education plans (IEPs) indicated that most respondents have a working understanding of special education implementation and paperwork; and, measures related to resources/allocation of resources and ideal classroom makeup showed that while most respondents favor smaller class sizes with additional instructional support providers, they disagreed that their districts have adequate financial and human resources to meet that need. The scores derived from the 11 survey content questions, related to policy, yielded the following descriptive statistics:

Table 8

Policy Statistics – Total Respondent Percentage/Total Respondent Selection

	Total Respondents	Strongly Disagree % #	Disagree % #	Neutral/ No Opinion % #	Agree % #	Strongly Agree % #	Mean (Standard Deviation)
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) has been successful towards ensuring equitable curricular access for children managing the effect(s) of a disabling impairment within the school setting.	97	3.09% 3	20.62% 20	25.77% 25	49.48% 48	1.03% 1	3.25 (0.90)
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) is a relevant and necessary policy.	98	1.02% 1	2.04% 2	15.31% 15	62.24% 61	19.39% 19	3.97 (0.72)
Facilitating student interdependence and creating meaningful social/educational connections among students, staff, and the community at-large is valued by those making policy decisions (e.g., legislators).	96	28.13% 27	41.67% 40	12.50% 12	16.67% 16	1.04% 1	2.21 (1.06)
Individuals making policy decisions understand the challenge of program implementation in an educational context.	97	39.18% 38	45.36% 44	7.22% 7	6.19% 6	2.06% 2	1.87 (0.94)
My school district has sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of its students.	98	29.59% 29	45.92% 45	9.18% 9	12.24% 12	3.06% 3	2.13 (1.07)
Students achieve more when in a smaller class with greater instructional	98	1.02% 1	6.12% 6	2.04% 2	47.96% 47	42.86% 42	4.26 (0.85)

intensity and support.							
My school district has sufficient human resources to meet the needs of all its students.	97	13.40% 13	46.39% 45	12.37% 12	24.74% 24	3.09% 3	2.58 (1.09)
In my experience, the implementation of current educational initiatives (e.g., PBIS, RtI, MTSS) has led to the elimination of valuable human resources.	97	1.03% 1	25.77% 25	44.33% 43	24.74% 24	4.12% 4	3.05 (0.84)
In my experience, current educational initiative (e.g., PBIS, RtI, MTSS) are effective.	98	3.06% 3	14.29% 14	25.51% 25	56.12% 55	1.02% 1	3.38 (0.85)
If a student has an individualized education plan (IEP), then I am not responsible for teaching him/her other components of the curriculum.	97	56.70% 55	40.21% 39	1.03% 1	1.03% 1	1.03% 1	1.49 (0.68)
A student's individualized education plan (IEP) is that student's curriculum.	96	33.33% 32	54.17% 52	5.21% 5	7.29% 7	0.00% 0	1.86 (0.81)

Not surprisingly, all of interview respondents' thoughts mirrored the findings of the survey. Regarding policy, Interviewee 1 stated, "I do my best to follow policies that I have been given, most of the time. I do tend to be a little rebel... I do my best to comply, while being non-compliant." Furthermore,

I think it's very helpful that everybody has a guideline to follow along – a basic document. So, having the law behind you or the, the IDEA behind you, I think is very important. Do I, do I rely on it? No... I mean, it's kind of like most policies...they're there for, for a guideline really more than anything. (Appendix E)

According to Interviewee 4,

I think my experiences and training have made me more aware of what the policies and mandates are regarding both general and special education...I know that I would abide by them regardless. I think that our training, um, teaches us to abide by policies and mandates. (Appendix H)

Interviewee 5 shared a similar sentiment, "...naturally you follow the...rules and...it's a matter of being a professional" (Appendix I). Indeed, it occurs to me that many preservice programs for educators and therapeutic practitioners do not teach professionals how to advocate on their own behalf and/or on behalf of the students they serve. Rather, professionals are taught to toe-the-line, and are not to question those in a position of authority – that the policy has been created in the best interests of the constituency; however, Interviewee 2 came to an interesting conclusion on this matter.

In essence, Interviewee 2 questioned whether special education policy was created in order to best meet the needs of/protect the students. Per Interviewee 2,

I do feel that there, there should be policies and mandates in place for students, and educators. I think that, I feel that my job as a teacher is to obviously follow those mandates and policies and procedures. However, I think that not all of them are student-friendly and take the child into consideration the most.

Additionally,

I feel that the legislators are looking for that data- for that piece where it is about the schools and the institutions, rather than...creating those socially acceptable, you know, connections and making those meaningful developments with teachers. You want those students to be able to have cooperative learning skills, and working together, and not to be, you know, worried about taking a test, or what is this doing for their financial development, and, you know, those kind of things. So, I think that, yeah, students, students should be at the forefront of all of these policies, but it's clear that sometimes they're not. (Appendix F)

An intriguing sentiment and critical insight into the potentially perverse motives that may well underpin this seemingly necessary, but not necessarily relevant, current special education policy in that one cannot help but to wonder if IDEIA is truly intended to

protect the interests of the institution under the guise of protecting the interests of children.

As for the issue of legislators' understanding of program implementation, Interviewee 3 stated,

...the people that create the policies and the rules that we follow don't have experience in the classroom, they don't take the time to go into the schools to see what it is they're talking about implementing...how it's going to affect the classrooms. And, therefore, they force us to put things in place that are inefficient, that they don't work well, and they end up harming children more than helping children. So, it would be really, really important that before the legislature... legislators, the people that are making the policies – get into schools and see exactly what it is they're trying to, as they say, "fix". (Appendix G).

Interviewee 3 went on to remark that

people that have the power to force things on us don't have the knowledge base...of being in the classroom. They haven't worked with 30 children in a classroom. They haven't worked with a, a special educator who has 15 children in a support group – which is way too big. Um, they, they want to change identifications of students and they want to make it more difficult for a child to receive help and they have this all-encompassing umbrella of, 'Let's do RtI, and it's gonna fix everything', and it really doesn't. It, it starts to put extreme pressures on a classroom teacher, without appropriate training, and without appropriate funding, and everything else that goes along with trying to "fix" some of the problems that we have in education. (Appendix G)

Interrogating Intelligence

The scores obtained from the survey yielded the following trends: questions related to making accommodations and modifications within the general education setting, as well as providing adequate support personnel to assist students while participating within the general education setting generally garnered a favorable response; scores pertaining to the privileging of the general education classroom setting as the ideal setting for all students showed that most respondents did not agree with that assertion; and, measures related to setting an arbitrary standard of academic achievement

and functional performance indicated an unfavorable response. The scores derived from the 11 survey content questions, related to intelligence, yielded the following results:

Table 9

Intelligence Statistics – Total Response Percentage/Total Respondent Selection

	Total Respondents	Strongly Disagree % #	Disagree % #	Neutral/ No Opinion % #	Agree % #	Strongly Agree % #	Mean (Standard Deviation)
Accommodations and/or modifications to the general education curriculum give special education students an unfair advantage.	97	43.30% 42	49.48% 48	5.15% 5	1.03% 1	1.03% 1	1.67 (0.71)
I modify my instructional language in order to make curricula more accessible for my students.	97	0.00% 0	1.03% 1	12.37% 12	49.48% 48	37.11% 36	4.23 (0.70)
Students should complete assigned tasks in the same way.	97	52.58% 51	44.33% 43	1.03% 1	1.03% 1	1.03% 1	1.54 (0.67)
Students should have multiple ways/options towards fulfilling curricular demands.	97	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.06% 2	47.42% 46	50.52% 49	4.48 (0.54)
Students can succeed with general education curricula if they just work harder at it.	95	43.16% 41	47.37% 45	5.26% 5	4.21% 4	0.00% 0	1.71 (0.75)
Knowledge of content is more important for good teaching than the ability to use a variety of teaching strategies.	96	29.17% 28	54.17% 52	14.58% 14	2.08% 2	0.00% 0	1.90 (0.71)
Common Core State Standards take into account all students' skills and aptitudes.	97	27.84% 27	53.61% 52	13.40% 13	5.15% 5	0.00% 0	1.96 (0.79)
All general education classrooms would benefit from the presence of an effective, qualified, classroom assistant.	96	1.04% 1	5.21% 5	6.25% 6	51.04% 49	36.46% 35	4.17 (0.84)
The general education classroom is the most		25.00%	61.46%	4.17%	9.38%	0.00%	1.98

supportive environment for all students.	96	24	59	4	9	0	(0.82)
The general education classroom is the preferred setting for all students.	96	7.29% 7	43.75% 42	3.13% 3	38.54% 37	7.29% 7	2.95 (1.18)
An equitable education could be defined as students of all skill levels and abilities consistently achieving and performing in a way that honors their learning profile.	98	0.00% 0	1.02% 1	5.10% 5	59.18% 58	34.69% 34	4.28 (0.60)

The trends noted from the interviewees were closely aligned with the survey data reported. On the matter of classroom accommodations and modifications, all five participants shared remarkable insights. Regarding making the curriculum more accessible Interviewee 1 stated, "...we will change it to whatever fits the needs of the students" (Appendix E). Per Interviewee 2,

I truly believe that all students should have accommodations and modifications, ...no student learns the same and so every child should be able, and that's part of creating that environment where you get to know your students and whether that's like student interest surveys, parent surveys...and, how do they learn best and yes, I may have to stand up in front of the room to teach them a lesson but, in the end of it all, like you want them to be able to come to you and say "I'm not understanding this" and, you have to be able to recognize that in the student, too and come up with other strategies and ways that you can sit and work with them ...small group, collaborative learning, peer learning- however it works so that they can become successful in those strategies and I think that's why there's so many different strategies out there to help the kids develop those skills because they're not all gonna get it, you know, some are visual, some are tactile, some are, you know, hands-on, and...every student in your classroom is different and yes, as hard as it is to accommodate all 28, you just, you do your best, and to use a variety of strategies to help them succeed and, you know, switch it up to make them be excited about learning, engaged, you want them to have fun at the same time and not to be threatened. You want them to be able to feel comfortable and ask those questions. A lot of kids don't self-advocate – they don't, they do not come up to you and say...so you have to recognize that in a student. Like, you want to teach them that confidence so they can self-advocate; they need to be able to, to tell, to tell what they need in their learning and their growing. (Appendix F)

Interviewee 4, a related services provider, offered the following thoughts regarding the differences in preservice training among education professional and its potential impact on creating/implementing accommodations and modifications,

I think that my education also focused strongly on the importance of taking an interdisciplinary approach, which I think is particularly beneficial in creating an optimal classroom setting...my education has strongly influenced my mind-set in how I implement those curricular changes.

Furthermore,

I'm well-trained in collaborating with a team and I think it's important to have the whole team helping to implement these accommodations and modifications for all students...and as a team, you know, we help all students, not just those who have been identified as benefitting from additional support or those with a disability, um, to participate in a classroom setting. (Appendix H)

While an advocate of making the appropriate accommodations and modifications for children, Interviewee 3 provided some valuable insight into the practicality of support implementation and potential barriers to that process stating,

I just feel that things are placed before a classroom teacher that they don't clearly understand, and they don't want to take the time to grasp 'what's the best way to do this'. There are very short periods of time that they're able to interact with their special educator to, to ask them questions, to, to try and get suggestions and ideas on, on 'what's the best way to take this material and, and deliver it' uh, not only to a child with a disability, but to every kid in the classroom 'cause they all learn differently...and, your special educator might have just a little bit more knowledge when it comes to delivery of curriculum instruction than a standard classroom teacher does...and, they just, they don't have the amount of time that they need to be able to do that. It comes down to time and money...which is sad. (Appendix G)

Yet, as Interviewee 5 so succinctly shared on this matter, "the more you do, the better you get" (Appendix I).

Prescribing Best Practices

The scores obtained from the survey yielded the following trends: questions related to the medicalization of education showed that while most respondents felt

knowing a student's medical diagnosis was helpful in adequately preparing them to meet that child's needs, the majority of respondents indicated that knowing that diagnosis does not definitively inform them about that child's future achievement and aptitude; questions related to the social framework under which we operate from a medical model showed that dominator social model based practices (ranking students, quantifying achievement) were seen as unfavorable, while social partnership model based practices (linking students, collaborating stakeholders) were viewed as favorable; however, when participants were asked to rate their familiarity with UDL half indicated familiarity, and half lacked familiarity. Yet, an overwhelming majority of respondents, 95.92%, were in favor of student placement based on the best fit for that particular student in order to create meaningful learning opportunities (not necessarily privileging one placement, or least restrictive placement, over another). The scores derived from the 11 survey content questions, related to the medical model in education, yielded the following results:

Table 10

Medicalization Statistics – Total Response Percentage/Total Respondent Selection

	Total Respondents	Strongly Disagree % #	Disagree % #	Neutral/No Opinion % #	Agree % #	Strongly Agree % #	Mean (Standard Deviation)
Standardized test scores provide valuable and accurate information that informs me about a student's broad achievement and abilities.	95	16.84% 16	35.79% 34	8.42% 8	37.89% 36	1.05% 1	2.71 (1.17)
I prefer to collaborate with school-based therapists/specialists in an intensive one-to-one and/or small group format rather than in a large group setting.	97	0.00% 0	7.22% 7	18.56% 18	56.70% 55	17.53% 17	3.85 (0.79)

Knowing a student's medical diagnosis definitively informs me about that child's future achievement and skills aptitude.	97	13.40% 13	49.48% 48	14.43% 14	19.59% 19	3.09% 3	2.49 (1.05)
The goal of school-based therapists is to cure a student's disability.	98	61.22% 60	36.73% 36	1.02% 1	0.00% 0	1.02% 1	1.43 (0.62)
I believe students with disabilities can achieve at the same level as their nondisabled peers.	92	6.52% 6	17.39% 16	13.04% 12	53.26% 49	9.78% 9	3.42 (1.09)
Knowing a student's medical diagnosis provides me with a greater understanding of that child's potential needs.	97	2.06% 2	7.22% 7	3.09% 3	63.92% 62	23.71% 23	4.00 (0.86)
The primary goal of special educators is to fix student deficits.	97	42.27% 41	52.58% 51	4.12% 4	1.03% 1	0.00% 0	1.64 (0.61)
Special education assessment and teaching strategies are more research-based than general education strategies.	98	4.08% 4	35.71% 35	37.76% 37	22.45% 22	0.00% 0	2.79 (0.84)
Students should be ranked based on intellectual proficiency and standardized scores so we know how a student compares to his/her peers.	96	25.00% 24	36.46% 35	21.88% 21	16.67% 16	0.00% 0	2.30 (1.02)
Student placement within an educational setting should be largely based on what is the best fit for the student.	98	0.00% 0	2.04% 2	2.04% 2	44.90% 44	51.02% 50	4.45 (0.64)
I am familiar with the term Universal Design for Learning (UDL).	95	12.63% 12	31.58% 30	11.58% 11	31.58% 30	12.63% 12	3.00 (1.28)

Which brings me to the singular impetus behind this entire research project, more specifically knowing what we know about the way things are in education- working with a divisive policy framed within a prohibitive dominator social model, limiting student success to a privileged intelligence, and locating disability in individuals (medical model

of disability) – how can we define an equitable education despite the fore noted? In my survey, I defined an equitable education as ‘students of all skill levels and abilities consistently achieving and performing in a way that honors their learning profile’, and while an overwhelming 93.87% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that sentiment, I think my interview participants truly got to the heart of the matter.

As to the issue of an equitable education, Interviewee 1 stated,

We take away all children’s ability to be problem solvers by thinking that having a test and answering a question determines whether or not they learned something or didn’t learn something. Because, I have students who walked in my classroom freshman year, and couldn’t open up a locker, put their stuff away and come into my classroom and now can, and that was a huge growth and learning opportunity. I think that all students should be given the opportunity to be in a situation where they can attempt to learn whatever is most valuable for them in that situation. (Appendix E)

Similarly, Interviewee 5 noted,

...an equitable education, to me, would be a, a student that felt like they got something out of their experience; that they felt like they, they could take away something...can walk away with a new, a new experience. To where they...look forward to their next experience. That...they say “Oh, okay, I’m ready for the next new challenge”. (Appendix I)

When asked about an equitable education Interviewee 2 remarked,

I think that all students deserve an education obviously that provides opportunities...for their advancement. So, if you’re a teacher in a classroom...you are teaching those students...to the best of your ability and you are providing opportunities for every student in your classroom to advance to that next step- whatever that next step is for their learning. So, if they are, you know, differentiated curriculum, and just providing situations that are real life experiences for them and engagement that they’re gonna become successful citizens in society so that they can have those opportunities to do what they want to do. Whether that’s, you know, become a hairstylist or a doctor...it doesn’t matter. You just need to give them the opportunities to fuel...and ignite that passion whatever it is in them...so that they can move to that next step and develop and, you know, find what, what they are good at and find what they are strong at...find what they want to, you know, do in their life, and you know they may not know that in elementary school but, you are giving them those resources

and those opportunities and those methods of thinking to keep them moving toward those next steps. (Appendix F)

Interviewee 3 defined as equitable education as "...all students are given balanced opportunities to gain knowledge, to their best ability, with equal access to all forms of instruction." Furthermore,

I just believe that it's very important...it's very important, no matter what the child's ability and learning is, that they're offered the same plate, or palette, of things that the smartest child in the building gets to the most disabled child in the building gets. And, what they learn from that is not gonna be the same as what the really smart person does, but yet, they're given that opportunity and they're able to receive from it what they can. And, so I, I think that's really important. (Appendix G)

Along those same lines of thought, Interviewee 4 shared the following,

I would describe an equitable education as an equal education for all students regardless of race, gender, disability, financial status, etc. This involves meeting students where they are in terms of their current abilities, and providing the appropriate support in order to help them succeed. Universal Design comes to mind and ...making education available to everybody regardless of...identifying factors about them. (Appendix H)

Although none of the interviewees shared the same job description within an educational setting (and had diverse educational backgrounds and professional experiences), they all work in the field of education- they all work with students to some degree each and every day, and they all are wholly aware of what opportunities their students need and currently do or do not have equitable access to within the school setting. This is not necessarily the case of bureaucrats, legislators, publishing companies, assessment developers, etc. So then, the question begs, if the institution benefits from keeping things the way they are in education, then changing the status quo benefits whom? – the children.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary and Conclusions

A people or nation never achieves the educational system that it needs; the system is always inadequate; it always lags behind the cultural imperatives of the extant society. The system itself is a mosaic of practices, traditions, and customs, a blend of vanity, pride, and prejudice, not the intelligent, creative invention and development of the educator's dream.

– E. B. Wesley

Rotten to the Core

When I began this process of investigation, I had my own theories as to how the American education system had failed to equitably meet the needs of all children. What I have come to understand on this journey, is that the system is as much a victim of socialized practices and beliefs as are those working within its folds, and those struggling to exit it. That said, I have discovered the following as it relates to my inquiry regarding, 'In what ways are the mechanistic ideations and assertions, associated with and valued within a heroic culture, reinforced by contemporary education practices?' Of note, operating within the framework of a dominator social model prohibits the enactment of progressive education legislation/initiatives.

As we are entrenched in a cultural framework that celebrates ranking individuals over linking humanity, dominating demands over partnering practices, and individualized, self-centered competing over collaborative, solutions-focused cooperating we have been set-up to fail as an institution (un)intended to meet the needs of all. In fact, 69.80% of survey respondents indicated that they disagreed with the idea that 'Facilitating student interdependence and creating meaningful social/educational connections among students, staff, and the community at-large is valued by those making policy decisions (e.g., legislators)'. The very heart of education has been corrupted by

technocrats touting reform through the imposition of accountability measures- quantifying professional/student competence and the adoption of one-size fits all learning standards- qualifying student aptitude (81.45% of survey respondents disagreed with the assertion that, ‘Common Core State Standards take into account all students’ skills and aptitudes’); and, the assertion that the science of educating individuals is greater than the art of educating all (90.53% of survey respondents indicated that they disagreed that ‘Students can succeed with general education curricula if they just work harder at it’)- failing to sustain its purpose.

Of the survey respondents, 61.46% disagreed that, ‘Students should be ranked based on intellectual proficiency and standardized scores so we know how a student compares to his/her peers’. As there is nothing standard about individual student growth and development, no singular measure can accurately predict/depict the individual growth/development potential that lays within every individual student. According to Interviewee 3,

The small growths that a child can show throughout the year at least prove that they’re learning, and it doesn’t mean that they’re stupid in any way if they’re not growing as fast as someone else. But, as long as it’s proof that what a teacher, or a social worker, or a special educator is doing with that child is helping them develop and grow a little bit each year...and, that’s what should count; it should be about growth, and not that they’re scoring 90% and higher on a test. (Appendix G)

It is not about ranking students and standardizing skills acquisition- it is about providing students with the learning opportunities that will develop each student to their fullest potential...from the stasis of academic achievement and functional performance to the dynamism of curricular responsiveness and skill expectancy. Per Interviewee 2,

I think it’s important to know what skills your children can do, and where that next step is going for them- like what is their next step in development. Yes, it

may take them a longer time to get to that step, but using all these, you know, state-driven tests and things like that is...it's really hard, because I feel like a lot of our creative teaching is going out the window because of...we need to make sure that these kids are ready for these state tests that get them to college, and get them career-ready and, which is fine...you want your kids to be citizens of, you know, productive citizens and you want them to be able to go out into the world and get a job, but I feel that providing the real life experiences, and those engaging experiences, will help them get there. It's not always just the test that tells what they're capable of doing. (Appendix F)

Redefining achievement and success in schools is dependent upon creating equitable student access to enriching learning opportunities and experiences. Too often, those in positions of authority fail to consider the perspectives of students and their families in determining what qualifies as personal success. Policy texts must be designed and interpreted in such a way as to be able to honor personal conceptualizations of success, not set a standard for it. Government should not be in the business of deciding what makes its people successful, it should be in the business of ensuring that its people have equitable access to opportunities that may potentially align with their personal conceptualizations of success. This also requires education professionals to take into ample consideration what students and their respective family's value and aspire towards in their educational pursuit. Interviewee 4 shared,

I think we all wear different lenses based on our experiences in education. Teachers will measure success differently than parents, administrators, therapists, etc. And, for me, I think it's important to talk to the student, teacher, parent, all of those people to determine how others perceive the success, or achievement, just so that I have a better understanding of how, you know, in a one-on-one setting or in a small group setting, I think students can show different levels of success than in a classroom or real-world experience. (Appendix H)

Along similar lines, Interviewee 1 remarked,

We've kind of lost the empathy towards what really somebody's life is like and I think that we have to...it has to be a better dialogue somewhere along the way where you know just buying i-pads for a classroom isn't the answer. It's not necessarily going to educate kids any better – trust me it's very helpful and there's

lots of ways to use it but that doesn't change the bottom-line outcome for our students. The real change comes from when we work together on the behavior plan, on the, on the outcomes that we want for the kids and it's not an adversarial "Well, it's your fault" or "It's your fault". It's really us all working together. (Appendix E)

It's about all of us working together to protect those that are vulnerable and at-risk of being marginalized and/or oppressed by policies and initiatives that segregate those that are "average" from those that are "exceptional".

Poisonous Seeds

As to the question of 'What socialized beliefs contribute to potentially disabling practices within the educational setting?' I have drawn several conclusions based on the survey results, as well as the interviews. If we fail to teach and assess students in a manner consistent with their learning profile and skill aptitude, then it is my sense that the validity of both the scientific methods employed and the conclusions drawn from data mined are corrupted. As Interviewee 2 so well stated,

...everything is so data driven right now and, I feel that assessments are important to know what your students can and cannot do and achieve, but there are so many different types of assessments that can be used through...observation/anecdotal notes...yes, the pre and post tests are great, but the problem is, is that there are some kids that just don't test well...and, I know that from my own experience growing up. I mean...I was a successful student through my years, but when it came to college prep tests and, you know, those kind of tests I scored very poorly, and I don't, I don't feel that it is because of my lack of knowledge (it may be for some), but, you know, I don't feel that it was, that was why I struggled...I feel that formats of tests are difficult, directions for some of the kids on those tests are difficult.

She continues,

I think it's important to know what skills your children can do, and where that next step is going for them - like what is their next step in development. Yes, it may take them a longer time to get to that step, but using all these, you know, state-driven tests and things like that is...it's really hard, because I feel like a lot of our creative teaching is going out the window. (Appendix F)

By privileging specific kind/kinds of intelligence (specifically logical-mathematical and/or linguistic), we are actually prohibiting student growth (96.91% of survey respondents disagreed with the assertion that ‘Students should complete assigned tasks in the same way’ and 97.94% agreed that ‘Students should have multiple ways/options towards fulfilling curricular demands’). Furthermore, fastidiously fostering antagonism among educators undermines professional trust and confidence. According to Interviewee 2,

I think that by providing professional development that allows teachers to really get a, more of a hands-on kind of feel, maybe going into classrooms where that ideal learning environment is visible. To see and to observe – because I think so much of what we see in the school setting is like collaboration among teachers and I think that if, you know, teachers can be flexible in seeing other people’s techniques and ways of doing things without feeling criticized and without thinking that they’re wrong all the time, but to learn and grow, and be able to realize that maybe something they’re doing is not creating the most optimal learning environment and to be able to, you know, understand that and just view something else that could help them, you know, become a better teacher and to be, create that better learning environment. (Appendix F)

Of the survey respondents, 92.78% disagreed that ‘Accommodations and/or modifications to the general education curriculum give special education students an unfair advantage’, and 86.59% agreed with the statement ‘I modify my instructional language in order to make curricula more accessible for my students needlessly’ as such, I aver that nurturing competition among students excludes and alienates a good many from their own personal pursuit of achievement and success (as they define it). Per Interviewee 2,

I think this goes back to, again, even the classroom accommodations and modifications- every student learns differently, and every student has different needs, and takes those steps at different times...the lightbulb goes on in their head at different times in their learning development. So...I truly believe that if a student needs more time on a skill, or decreased homework, or, you know, maybe a modification on the simplicity of directions, or things like that, that that should

be okay, because they're, they're learning at their own rate, they're developing at their own time- that lightbulb goes on when they're ready developmentally and so, I feel that implementing those accommodations and modifications for all students is necessary- and, it's, it's necessary. Is it perfect all the time? No, it's not...but, you try your best to really make sure that you can reach all those kids however that is. (Appendix F)

Additionally, as 81.45% of survey respondents disagreed with the notion that 'Common Core State Standards take into account all students' skills and aptitudes', I maintain that expecting a single set of narrow and seemingly arbitrary standards to fully embody the physical and neuro-diversity of all students is a foolhardy proposition of epic proportions.

A Few Bad Apples Spoils the Entire Bushel Not

Which brings me to my final points of inquiry, specifically, 'What systemic modifications: (a) mitigate potentially disabling practices within education, and (b) are necessary toward catalyzing a paradigmatic shift in the field?' In truth the answers to both lines of inquiry are veritably the same. You see, the same systemic components necessary towards mitigating potentially disabling practices within education are also the same systemic components that would catalyze a paradigmatic shift in the field. Based on the previously noted findings, we need to:

- Thoughtfully develop and enact progressive education policies and initiatives that serve to meet the needs of all students, without the necessity of an eligibility determinant, in order for students to access the abundance of school-based educational and therapeutic resources- both environmental and curricular;
- Purposefully interpret and implement said policy texts and initiatives within the framework of a social partnership model;

- Conscientiously eliminate the misuse/use of/overreliance upon high-stakes testing as the sole measure of determining student growth and progress;
- Consistently apply meaningful, relevant, and appropriate accommodations and modifications to the classroom environment and curricula;
- Fairly present instructional content given venerable consideration to the tenets associated with Universal Design for Learning (UDL);
- Respectfully accept and embrace diverse student learning profiles/styles;
- Equitably allocate and distribute financial and human resources;
- Amply allot time for worthwhile professional development and collaboration; and,
- Faithfully adopt, and philosophically adhere to with integrity and fidelity, the social model of disability.

In consideration of the aforementioned mitigating factors/catalysts, the American education system then becomes salvageable.

Discussion and Recommendations

Traditional therapeutic service delivery: A self-fulfilling prophecy of student failure. As I have alluded to, re/habilitative services within the school setting requires the allocation of a specified amount of time to address discrete goals given an accepted standard of traditional, itinerant service delivery models. Procuring said services in order to support an identified student currently requires (per IDEIA) that the deficiency be located in the child (given an eligibility determination) and no necessarily the classroom setting, teacher, or curricular materials, etc. Per Danforth (2006):

By focusing on concerns of individual dysfunction and goals of increasing functionality, the field has rarely raised its eyes to question the pervasive

structures and processes that capture specific forms of biological and cultural difference within social conditions of economic poverty and community exclusion. (p. 86)

As such, receiving/participating in therapy services within the school setting does not necessarily guarantee improved learning outcomes for identified students. In fact, it (IDEIA) only guarantees that students will have access to specialized intervention if their respective impairments negatively impact their aggregated educational performance. By ignoring the extraneous factors that effect a child's academic achievement, much of what practitioners provide is but a band-aid on a deep, festering wound; the child's noticeable impairments are attended to and concealed, but the extraneous factors that continually contribute to the student's school failure are largely ignored and left to perpetually plague the child's potential future learning opportunities. As noted by Interviewee 4,

I think that students are going to reach their own individual potentials, and I think teachers should be accepting to the fact that students, are going to have different levels of...what those potentials are and...shouldn't all be expected to do exactly the same thing- even within the same class and within the same curriculum.
(Appendix H)

As a school-based therapeutic practitioner, I provide services to identified students via one-to-one, in small groups, and in large groups (see Figure 1). In my experience, irrespective of service delivery model or combination thereof, my students have generally fared well within the general education setting given the appropriate classroom-based supports and learning structure. What has changed in my practice, as time has passed, is not the amount of direct service time I spend with identified students, but the time I spend consulting with the teachers. As to the issue of supporting teachers and the necessity of time, Interviewee 3 remarked,

I know that, um, the typical teacher still finds it difficult today to do the appropriate things that they need to. They feel like they themselves don't have the

adequate training...that they're not receiving the proper resources- from, um, their case worker on their team, or the special educator, and I, I want to say it really comes down to time. That if we had more time, that the special education team members could collaborate with the standard teachers, you know, the classroom teachers, they'd be able to help them develop some of the skills they would need to transition a little bit more easily. (Appendix G)

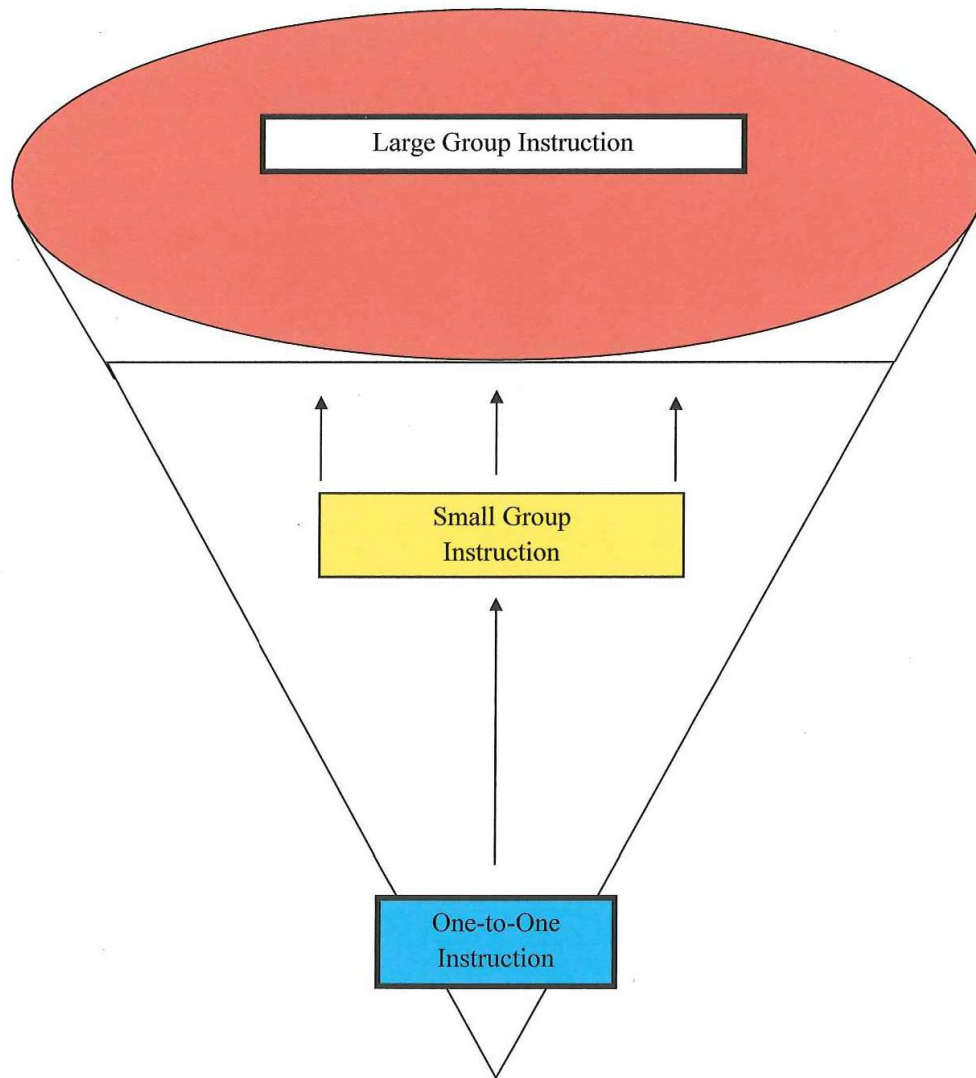


Figure 1: A traditional itinerant service delivery model for working with identified students

Sharing a sentiment on the benefit of collaborating with other professionals, Interviewee 2 highlighted the need for,

positive encounters and collaboration among staff members to create that best learning environment for that student, and however long they were in my classroom for whether that was an hour, a half hour, you know, half of a day...yeah, there's definitely been some really good experiences for supporting those students in the classroom and, you know, we've had, like I said, different professional development training...the CPI, there's been, you know, other, other, I think meeting with the RtI team on ways to help, you know, support those students in the classroom has been very positive. (Appendix F)

Historically, the primary role of the school-based speech-language pathologist (SLP) was to make sure that qualifying children were able to effectively comprehend and convey verbal information within the educational setting. While the fore noted remains consistent with accepted best practices (per the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association-ASHA), it is my sense that speech pathologists, as well as all school-based practitioners, can and should work toward altering their traditional, comprehensive service delivery model. In doing so, SLPs (acting more as communication facilitators) will not only meet the needs of qualifying students, but will meet the language-based education and communication needs of all students.

Furthermore, the possibility for greater amounts of collaboration by and among the SLPs with classroom teachers and associated classroom staff would likely facilitate a more meaningful learning process for all members (including students) within an actively engaged classroom's/school's learning community, which according to 74.23% of survey respondents was seen as favorable. Continuing along the course upon which we have been set (via over-relying upon psychometric assessments, locating disability within the individual, and failing to question the integrity of the systems and organizations that define/guide our therapeutic practice) will only serve to further perpetuate therapeutic failure in the schools (Ferguson, 2002). It is only by transforming our professional practices that we can truly hope to meet the needs of the students we strive to assist.

“Anomaly appears only against the backdrop provided by the paradigm” (Kuhn, 1996, p. 65).

Special delivery: A new way to practice. Rather than exclusively serving students identified with a disabling communication impairment, I propose that the role of SLPs be altered such that the teachers and classroom staff be the primary beneficiaries of the therapists’ expertise (in order to modify, refine, and transform their use of instructional language); ergo the students become the direct beneficiaries of their respective educators’ new-found, linguistic flexibility during instruction. By using a framework of intervention consistent with many school-based SLPs current practices, this paradigm shift is not only possible towards meeting the communication needs of most students within the classroom setting, but is also quite amiable. Thus, facilitating the transition of the professionals’ scope of practice, from one bound by the current, highly restrictive model of special education as a speech-language pathologist, to that of unlimited possibilities as a communication facilitator [which happens to be more consistent with a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework] can occur.

In the previous section, traditional therapeutic service delivery: a self-fulfilling prophecy of student failure, I referred to providing traditional therapeutic speech services to students discretely, or in a combination of three ways- one-to-one, small group, and/or large group. As a given, were the aforementioned traditional, comprehensive model of service delivery applied specifically to working with and collaborating directly with educators, the direct application would be a direct inversion (at least initially) of the dynamic noted in the traditional therapist/child interaction (see Figure 2).

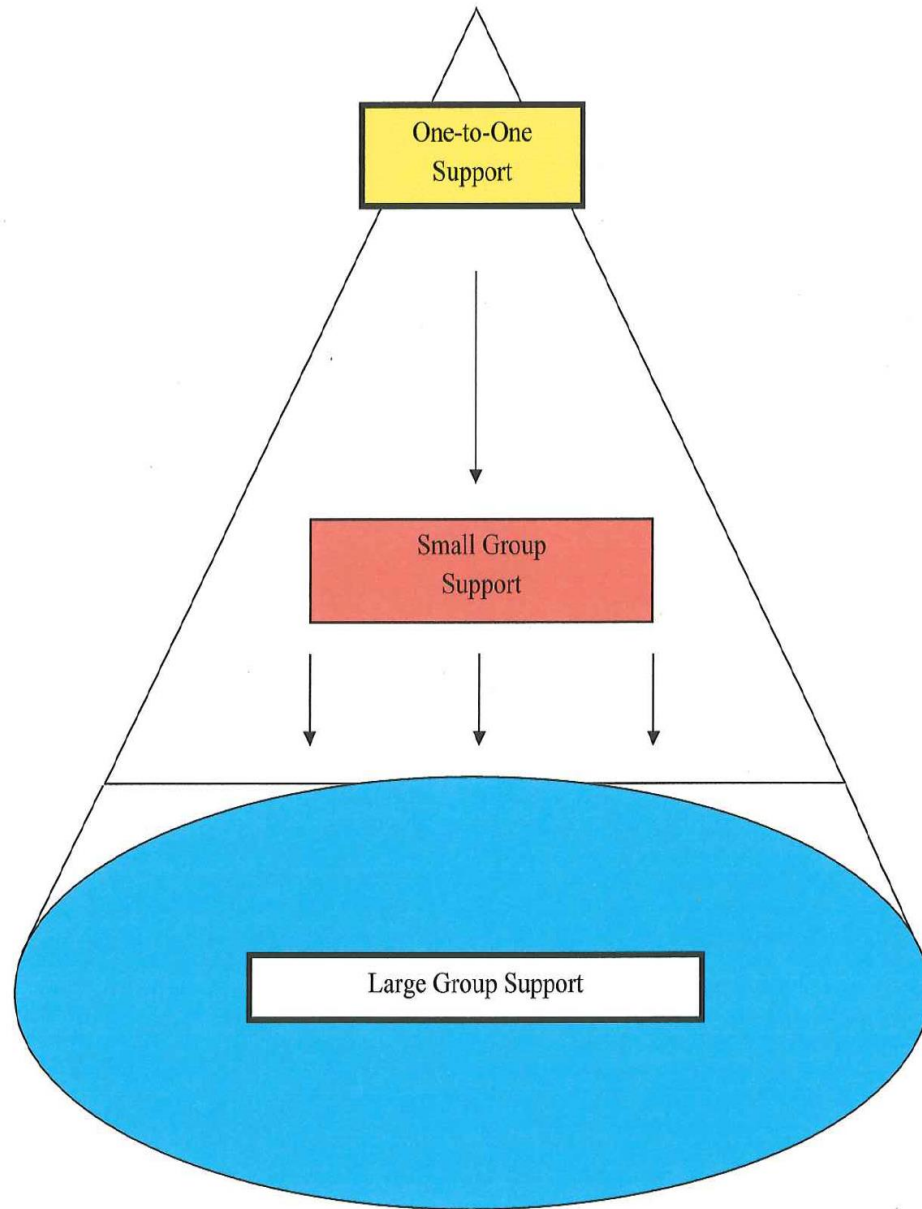


Figure 2. A proposed itinerant service delivery model for working with educators

For the speech therapist, the goal when working with children is to develop each child's communication skills to a level consistent with their age-level peers within the least restrictive environment (LRE) in which the greatest amount of gains could potentially be made. Therefore, working in a one-to-one situation is considered highly restrictive, whereas working in small groups less so; ideally, working within a large

group with typically developing peers as the least restrictive. However, research in the area of professional development in-services has shown that presenting to large groups of adults is virtually ineffective in motivating said individuals to change their current practices. Hence, while working with kids in larger groups is considered the ideal, with adults it is the exact opposite.

Although some gains can be made collaborating in smaller groups with educators, it is the direct one-to-one interactions between a single educator and therapist/facilitator that will ultimately yield the greatest amount of results in transforming said teacher's patterns of instructional language (essentially it is the teacher's language use that requires compensatory remediation and support- not a child's inability to understand scripted verbal instructions/teaching). Of course, changing a therapist's focus does not render them unnecessary in meeting the needs of students experiencing significantly debilitating communication impairments (see Figure 3). It does however diminish the over-identification of non-disabled children presenting with developmental and/or easily accommodated communication impairments within the school setting. A teacher's subsequent use of compensated instructional language strategies and facilitative prompts provide maximum instructional communication support to all students irrespective of their varying communication abilities.

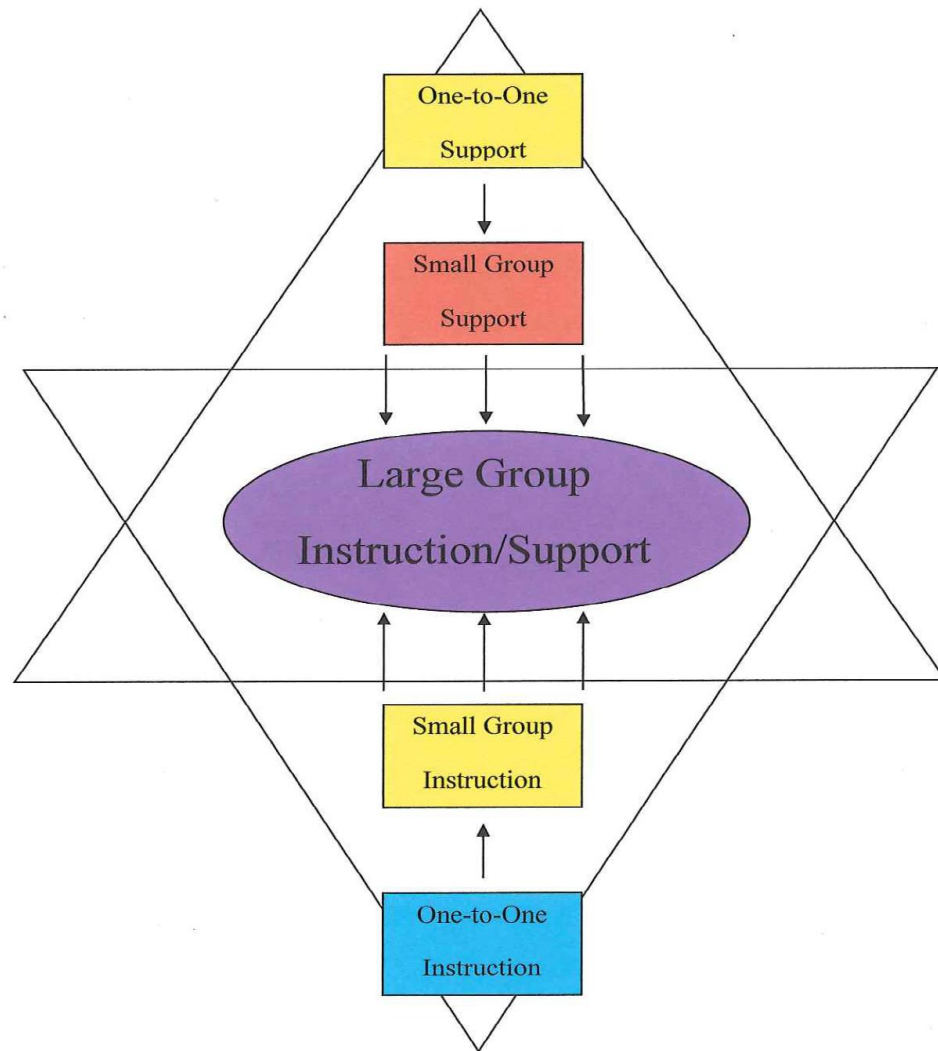


Figure 3: A synthesis of the traditional and proposed service delivery models for working with students and educators

The fore noted shift would require the communication facilitator to work very closely with the classroom teacher, assistant, and possible parent volunteers in order to model improved instructional language techniques within a variety of school-based contexts given multiple learning opportunities until the newly acquired/compensated language skills were habituated and relatively automatic. The teacher's newfound use of "helpful hints" (paired with visual support if needed) could potentially occur throughout the course of each and every activity of each and every day, and could be easily modified

to ensure that all students could access them in order to effectively communicate during formal and informal activities. In doing so, the students are given agency, and the adults (confident in their own abilities) are able to provide differentiated levels of instructional communication support in order to respectfully attend to each child's unique learning and communicating needs.

Such a shift may seem somewhat insignificant or pedestrian, but it would indeed be quite radical (as the disability is no longer located in the student, but in the lack of supportive instructional language employed by the educators throughout the day- which has in fact continually acted as a barrier for many "disabled" students in accessing the general education curriculum). Transforming an educator's language of instruction is paramount towards enacting a praxis framework consistent with the concepts of UDL; much is to be gained in the simple act of transitioning the therapeutic focus from the children to the instructors. It is the transformation of special education within the framework of an accepted service delivery model – it is a special delivery, open to a new way of practice premised upon a basic framework related to cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Hollum, 1991) among and between classroom educators and related services providers. Yet, in order to ensure that practitioners are able to effectively meet new responsibilities, it is imperative that the verbiage contained within the IDEIA policy reflect a commitment to transformation, as well.

Of note, 81.63% of survey respondents indicated that 'The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) is a relevant and necessary policy' which is of particular concern, to me, as the systemic adherence to the belief/practice in educating children in the least restrictive environment, or LRE (which

privileges the general education classroom, implies the preference of independence over interdependence, and is not synonymous with supportive), such that least restrictive implies the least supportive environment in which the child is able to be the most functionally independent. In order for interdependence to supplant independence, and least restrictive to manifest as most supportive, I propose that a convergence of regular education initiatives and special education legislation is necessary to universalize the American education system to benefit all American children. While I am not advocating for a complete dissolution of IDEIA – as some legislation is necessary to ensure that all members of the population, irrespective of innate abilities and predispositions, are able to continue to access services needed to function within their engaged learning community, I am proposing that all children should have the opportunity to access a free and appropriate public education in a maximally supportive classroom/learning environment (MSCLE) through which the greatest amount of equitable functional and academic skills acquisition can occur.

The MSCLE Model: A partnership with power. As I have previously stated, it is my sense that there are four fundamental elements necessary toward effectively educating all children. They are as follows: educational opportunities should empower students in their respective pursuits of learning; instructional environments must be designed to provide maximally supportive learning opportunities; education professionals need to consistently and appropriately provide effective strategies of instructional differentiation; and, the conscientious facilitation of interdependence must supplant aggrandized notions of independence among students, adults, and the community at-large. While I have identified several aspects that serve to act as barriers to effectively

educating all children, I would now like to propose a novel framework toward effecting lasting, positive, educational transformation (particularly for individuals experiencing high-incidence disabilities related to communication disorders and language-based learning disabilities). Said framework is premised upon aspects related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) given a fundamental shift in the allocation and use of therapeutic services within the general education environment- from student-centered/disability-driven instruction to classroom-centered/differentiation-driven support.

In a maximally supportive classroom/learning environment related services providers would work directly with all members of the learning community (including teacher and support staff) to ensure that all members are able to access and engage with the curricular content, associated tools, and other members in a manner that is consistent with his/her respective learning style(s)/profile. The related services providers/facilitators would provide both student-centered therapeutic instruction, as well as educator-centered support within the classroom setting in a fluid manner. All aspects of instruction/support would be nested within the classroom setting- be it one-to-one, small group, and/or large group to all for increased flexibility (see Figure 4). As opposed to arranged in a traditional hierarchy grounded by the assumption of a least restrictive environment in which the greatest amount of gains could be made towards the end goal of functional independence.

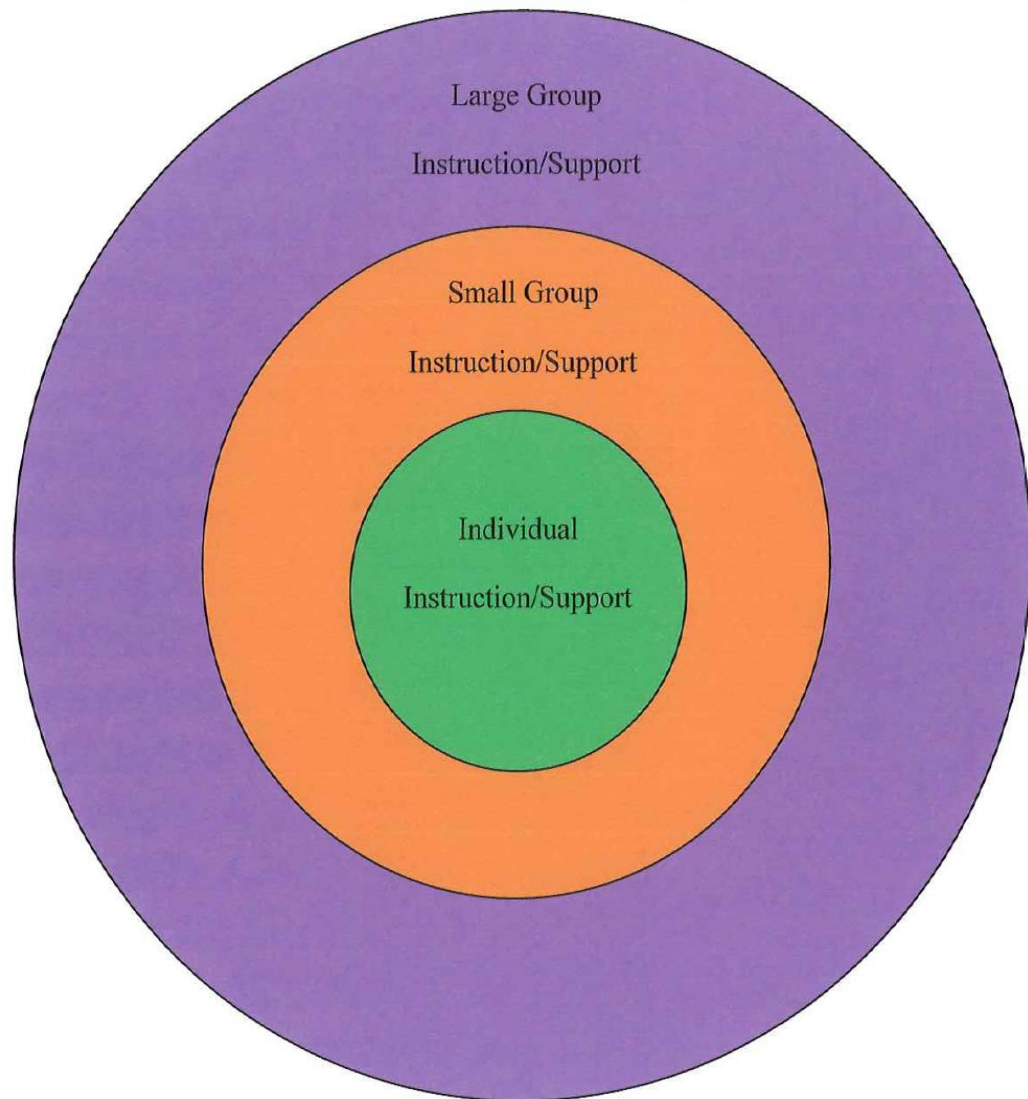


Figure 4. The **M**aximally **S**upportive **C**lassroom/**L**earning **E**nvironment

Materials would be presented in multiple formats (print-based, video, audio, digitized, etc.) that would allow for on-the-spot, individualized/personalized modifications to the: size of content, intensity of amplification, contrast of the visual elements, as well as level of instructional challenge. The instructional language employed by all adult members of the engaged learning community would be compensated for via a

set of facilitative cueing strategies specifically designed to ensure that all students are given ample opportunities to meet the linguistic demands and conceptual challenges of the presented curricular content.

Said strategies would be incorporated into the structure of all classroom-based learning opportunities in conjunction with the more traditional, language processing strategies, facilitative strategies of: additional response time; content repetition; rephrasing of inquiries using other conventional question words (i.e., instead of ‘why’ using ‘how come’, instead of ‘what do’ using ‘how do’, etc.); use of additional response time after the conventional question-form rephrasing; and, stating the desired answer to the child (Richard & Hanner, 1987). By restating question forms and providing facilitative question prompts and supports via modeled answers, verbal statements, phrase cloze prompts, and forced choices all members of the learning community would be able to elicit/share desired information irrespective of achievement level.

PREPARE Yourself

Enhancing the educational experience of all students and ensuring equitable access to a school environment, as well as its curriculum, requires that professionals must be adequately prepared to meet the challenges ahead. Thus, as a means of addressing some potential (im)practical aspects involved in adopting/implementing the MSCLE model, I offer for your review and contemplation some additional points of consideration, they are: ‘ONE to ONE’; and, PREPARE.

Professionals deserve the opportunity to benefit from the collective expertise, not only of their school-based colleagues, but of advocates, researchers, and leaders within the field of education and related school-based professions. Therefore, the creation of an

Organized Network of Educators to facilitate meaningful student learning **Outcomes** thereby effectively meeting the **Needs** of all children in a maximally supportive classroom learning **Environment**, ‘ONE to ONE’, would be prudent. Such an organization could provide those at the forefront of this movement/transition, with practical solutions to common difficulties, premised upon a UDL/social model of disability/disability studies perspective/philosophical framework. Additionally, members would have the opportunity to train with individuals that are well-versed in UDL, as well as in differentiation strategies and therapeutic support strategies, with an understanding of disability and the theoretical/practical implications of disability within a social model.

Towards ensuring equitable curricular accessibility for all children irrespective of learning profile, educators must be able to afford every student the opportunity to access and use a traditional curriculum, given appropriate modifications/differentiation, in a maximally supportive classroom learning environment. That said, I propose that we prepare future generations to meet the challenges of succeeding in the 21st Century, and in order to meet the varied needs of diverse learners we need to ameliorate restrictive educational environments, while at the same time creating meaningful, personalized enrichment support from the resources currently available...a plan for students and educators that is both flexible and comprehensive in make-up...a **Personalized Resource Enrichment Plan- Ameliorating Restrictive Education** (‘PREPARE’).

A scaffold document designed to effectively meet the ever-changing needs of children in a maximally supportive classroom learning environment, a **Personalized Resource Enrichment Plan**, or ‘PREP’ affords every student enrolled in American public education to have access to the supports available within the educational setting without

need of an identifiable, disabling impairment. With a PREP, there is no need for goals/benchmarks/objectives – as it’s about optimizing the access and use of school-based therapeutic/enrichment services (not highlighting the deficits of the student). For example, if a student has an articulation impairment, then the PREP includes therapeutic speech services; if a student has fine motor impairment, then the PREP includes occupational therapy services; and, if a student is struggling with interpersonal relationships, then the PREP includes social work, etc. Under ‘PREPARE’, assessments of students must also include assessments of the child’s classroom learning environment/curricular accessibility. A PREP is not about minutes and location, it’s not about “goals” – it’s about support services being in place where/when necessary to enhance students’ learning experiences. A PREP is not about updates, or targeting identified deficits attributed to the individual, it’s about open lines of communication with all participants to create maximally supportive classroom learning environments and curriculums.

The medicalization of education has limited therapeutic practitioners and special educators to very narrowly defined roles. Unlike a case manager taking charge of an individualized education plan, a PREP Coordinator is an education professional responsible for ensuring that PREP members (including staff, administrators, parents, student) are privy to the support and training necessary to support student learning across contexts. A PREP Coordinator (PC) is not an Inclusion Facilitator, not a Special Education Director, and/or Special Education Coordinator. A PC needs to have training/experience working with children experiencing disabling impairments, as well as the ability to support PREP participants via facilitative strategies, technology, instructional modifications, etc. I would suggest that a PC certification process include

both theoretical (from a social model/UDL/disability studies perspective) and practical educational experiences (multiple 12 week practicums with school-based related services providers). The certification process could be spearheaded by the ONE to ONE movement.

The inception of transformation within any institutionalized system is never a welcome proposition to those benefitting from the status quo. Given that, the strength of the MSCLE Model, given PREP and ONE to ONE, could eventually expand beyond the educational setting toward creating maximally supportive community/living environments, whereby independence is no longer the archetypal ideal within American society and interdependence is understood, valued, and able to assume its rightful place within a thriving democracy.

I am aware that systemic change is a daunting task that requires great discipline and perseverance; it requires hard work and a commitment to see it through to fruition. Then again, I have heard tell that anything worth having is as such. It is evident, given my proposed framework, that changes are required both at the macro-and micro-levels. At the macro-level, the federal government and associations governing the preferred practices of therapeutic intervention service providers must transform the language of their respective policy texts in order to modify the general structure of the education system. At the micro-level, those working within the system must be willing to transform their personal professional practices and be open to realizing equitable outcomes for those they are privileged to serve. Of course, there are other issues which would need to be attended to, such as pre-service professional training and funding/equitable

distribution of financial resources. Relating to professional training, Interviewee 5 noted that,

...for what I do, we don't get a high amount of training. We do get a sufficient amount, but...most of our experience comes from OJT...on the job training...and we do get some supplemental training, but it's usually within the bounds of...what the school is actually doing. But, for our job, ours is "hit the ground running" and...we learn that way...ask a lot of questions...it's mostly you learn as you go. (Appendix I)

Interviewee 1 shared an interesting note regarding training and stated,

I think all staff should be, paraprofessionals should have more training than they get, because many of them walk in and although their heart is in the right place they don't really know what they're doing. I think that an ideal learning situation would be two teachers in a classroom, so you could team-teach, and therefore you have instead of maybe extra paraprofessionals, but you have an actual two teachers. And then, that also helps in my situation with being able to teach to your strengths. (Appendix E)

As to the issues of training and funding, Interviewee 3 stated,

...people that have the power to force things on us don't have the knowledge base...of being in the classroom. They haven't worked with 30 children in a classroom. They haven't worked with a, a special educator who has 15 children in a support group – which is way too big. Um, they, they want to change identifications of students and they want to make it more difficult for a child to receive help and they have this all-encompassing umbrella of, 'Let's do RtI, and it's gonna fix everything', and it really doesn't. It...starts to put extreme pressures on a classroom teacher, without appropriate training, and without appropriate funding, and everything else that goes along with trying to "fix" some of the problems that we have in education. (Appendix G)

Regarding education funding, Interviewee 3 proposed the following solution to inadequate school resources and suggested "...that it just needs to be one great, big, huge, melting pot that is somehow evenly divided up among schools" (Appendix G). When I clarified his statement and suggested 'an equitable redistribution of funds', he replied affirmatively. Thankfully, much can already be done within the constraints of the current

system given the drive, will, and determination of those no longer content to practice under the mythic veil of meritocracy.

Dead wood and saplings: The present study limitations and possible future lines of inquiry. This research study provided a wealth of information regarding potentially disabling barriers in education; however, the overall survey respondent rate of return was much lower than anticipated/hoped for at the study's outset. As there was no incentive offered/provided for respondent participation it would seem that many potential participants simply opted not to complete the survey. In consideration of the fore noted, perhaps some sort of incentive or opportunity to receive an award in a random drawing would entice reluctant participants in forthcoming inquiries.

As for potential future directions, additional research and development in the area of inter-professional educational programming would be a progressive course of action mutually beneficial for all school-based professionals, which will in turn benefit all students. Additionally, active engagement in critical scholarship and policy activism (with a focus on all children and how best to meet their personal learning needs) must continue in order to educate those in positions of power and authority as to the harm that is being perpetrated upon our youth by continuing to reform an inadequate system with untenable solutions. If we want our youth to think outside the proverbial box, so too must we be willing to do the same in order to expand our compressed horizons- beyond our imposed limitations.

In order to catalyze meaningful change effectively within the framework of a large institution, researchers must be willing to question the foundational underpinnings of said institution and scrutinize mainstream assumptions that lead to the self-reinforcing

tenets of the system in and of itself. The more self-serving an institution becomes, the farther it strays from serving those within its structure. In the case of education, if bureaucrats and legislators continue to imbue the institution with misinformed rhetoric touted by non-educators and technocrats, then the rules and regulations associated with that system no longer protect and serve the interests of those existing within its fold- namely the students, educators, and stakeholders; the rules and regulations, the labels and restrictions only serve to preserve and protect the institution for its own sake.

In sum, I am wholly aware that what I am proposing may be understood and construed- by those thriving within the establishment, as counter to accepted, contemporary practices within the field of education. In truth, what I have offered for consideration will, in fact, be upsetting/up-setting the apple cart.

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Appendix A: Survey Consent Form

My name is Amy Tepper Karolewicz. I am a doctoral candidate in the Disability and Equity in Education Program at National Louis University. I am conducting a brief survey in order to satisfy the research requirement towards the completion of my doctoral thesis. If you are at least 20 years of age, you are eligible to participate in this survey.

The survey involves answering some general demographic questions, as well as some questions regarding your perceptions regarding current educational trends and practices in general education and/or special education. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete. The purpose of the survey is to help this researcher learn more about the functional dynamics existing between general education and special education. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will be completely anonymous. The data collected will be analyzed at the group level only. The information obtained from the survey analysis will be used for the purposes of this particular research study and any potential, associated, future publication expressly related to this area of inquiry. There are no consequences if you decide not to complete the survey.

If you agree to complete the survey and wish to be considered for a follow-up interview, then please write only your first name and list a phone number or e-mail address where you can be contacted by this researcher in the comments box in the demographics portion of the survey. By filling out the survey you are consenting to participate.

There is no obligation to complete the survey. If you do not want to complete the survey, then simply delete the e-mail.

This doctoral research is being supervised by Valerie Owen, PhD. If you have any questions about the research, you may contact Dr. Owen at vowen@nl.edu. This project has been approved by the National Louis University Institutional Research and Review Board (IRRB).

The results of this project will be available after November 2015. If you would like to access a copy of the research results or have any questions, please contact Dr. Valerie Owen via email at: vowen@nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact the researcher: Amy Tepper Karolewicz, National Louis University doctoral student, 224-234-1675; akarolewicz@my.nl.edu; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603.

If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact: Dr. Valerie Owen, vowen@nl.edu; 1-888-658-8632; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603; or, Dr. Terry Smith, tsmith@nl.edu; 1-888-658-8632; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603; or, the National Louis University Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 224-233-2328, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603.

Please print a copy of this letter for your records. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B: Online Survey**Mitigating Potential Barriers in Education****Demographics:****1. Contact Information (optional):**

First Name:

E-mail/Phone:

2. Gender Identified:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. Age Range:

- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70-79

4. Years Working in Education:

- ☐ 0-4
- ☐ 5-9
- ☐ 10-19
- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49

5. Primary Role:

- ☐ General Educator
- ☐ Special Educator
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Paraprofessional

☐ Other (please specify)

6. Setting(s):

☐ Elementary
☐ Middle
☐ Secondary
☐ Other (please specify)

7. Highest Level of Education:

☐ Associates
☐ Bachelors
☐ Masters
☐ Doctorate
☐ Post-Doctoral
☐ Other (please specify)

Content Questions:

8. The general education classroom is the preferred setting for all students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

9. Students achieve more when in a smaller class with greater instructional intensity and support.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

10. Standardized test scores provide valuable and accurate information that informs me about a student's broad achievement and abilities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

11. My school district has sufficient human resources to meet the needs of all its students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

12. Common Core State Standards take into account all students' skills and aptitudes.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

13. In my experience, current educational initiative (e.g., PBIS, RtI, MTSS) are effective.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

14. Accommodations and/or modifications to the general education curriculum give special education students an unfair advantage.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

15. I prefer to collaborate with school-based therapists/specialists in an intensive one-to-one and/or small group format rather than in a large group setting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

16. Students should be ranked based on intellectual proficiency and standardized scores so we know how a student compares to his/her peers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

17. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) has been successful towards ensuring equitable curricular access for children managing the effect(s) of a disabling impairment within the school setting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

18. Facilitating student interdependence and creating meaningful social/educational connections among students, staff, and the community at-large is valued by those making policy decisions (e.g., legislators).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

19. Knowing a student's medical diagnosis definitively informs me about that child's future achievement and skills aptitude.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

20. A student's individualized education plan (IEP) is that student's curriculum.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

21. Students should complete assigned tasks in the same way.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

22. The goal of school-based therapists is to cure a student's disability.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

23. Students can succeed with general education curricula if they just work harder at it.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

24. I believe students with disabilities can achieve at the same level as their nondisabled peers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

25. Knowledge of content is more important for good teaching than the ability to use a variety of teaching strategies.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

26. Knowing a student's medical diagnosis provides me with a greater understanding of that child's potential needs.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

27. If a student has an individualized education plan (IEP), then I am not responsible for teaching him/her other components of the curriculum.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

28. The primary goal of special educators is to fix student deficits.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

29. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) is a relevant and necessary policy.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

30. Individuals making policy decisions understand the challenge of program implementation in an educational context.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

31. In my experience, the implementation of current educational initiatives (e.g., PBIS, RtI, MTSS) has led to the elimination of valuable human resources.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

32. I am familiar with the term Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

33. All general education classrooms would benefit from the presence of an effective, qualified, classroom assistant.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

34. Students should have multiple ways/options towards fulfilling curricular demands.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

35. The general education classroom is the most supportive environment for all students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

36. Special education assessment and teaching strategies are more research-based than general education strategies.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

37. My school district has sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of its students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

38. Student placement within an educational setting should be largely based on what is the best fit for the student.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

39. I modify my instructional language in order to make curricula more accessible for my students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

40. An equitable education could be defined as students of all skill levels and abilities consistently achieving and performing in a way that honors their learning profile.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please indicate your response:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

Appendix C: Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Amy Tepper Karolewicz, a doctoral candidate, affiliated with National Louis University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about best teaching practices within the educational setting. I will be one of approximately 5 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one in my school district will be told.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Amy Tepper Karolewicz, a doctoral candidate, affiliated with National Louis University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. The interview tape along with field notes and transcripts will be secured. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

4. Data will be stored on a password protected computer and flash drive exclusively accessible to this researcher. Hard copies of surveys and signed consent forms will be scanned and uploaded into a password protected file, then shredded for disposal. Interview audio-recordings will be transcribed and saved in a password protected computer file; original recordings will be erased once transcribed.

5. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name, or by school, in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

6. Faculty and administrators from my school district will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

7. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research and Review Board (IRRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects at National Louis University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted via e-mail at: IRRBMailbox@nl.edu.

8. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

9. In the event I have questions or require additional information, I may contact the researcher: Amy Tepper Karolewicz, National Louis University doctoral student, 224-234-1675; akarolewicz@my.nl.edu; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603.

10. If I have any concerns or questions before or during participation that I feel have not been addressed by the researcher, I may contact: Dr. Valerie Owen, vowen@nl.edu; 1-888-658-8632; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603; or, Dr. Terry Smith, tsmith@nl.edu; 1-888-658-8632; 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603; or, the National Louis University Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 224-233-2328, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603.

11. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Investigator

Appendix D: Guided Interview Questions

Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?

How do you envision the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

How would you propose stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, legislators, etc.) bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?

How would you define or describe an equitable education?

How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding:

- **Supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting;**
- **Creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students;**
- **Implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students;**
- **Quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success;**
- **Abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education).**

Script: Thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need of clarification.

Appendix E: Interview #1**Key:****R: Researcher****I1: Interviewee**

R: Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

R: Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

R: When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

I1: Well, I would say there's many times that I felt that I made a significant difference in many different ways that I knew. One of my favorites was I had a student who we were using the PCI reading program in order, it's sight-word basically based, and we had been working on it and this was a nonverbal student who used a lot of body language. He came to me in high school with no real signs and no real language and he

was bilingual, also. And, everybody had said devices had failed and at this point he felt he was a verbal communicator even if nobody understood him. So, each word that we would learn, in the reading program, we did with sign. And he would do it during the reading program and read the sentences and gaining words and gaining signs, but never used it. And we went to a mobility trip – and I can't remember the name of the place – up on 176, and they were doing this whole thing about farms and cities and towns and how things have changed, you know, in Lake County since early settlers came. And he turned and he walked up to me and pointed and then said, "Not in a city" in sign, and he had never used it. And, he said, he said "This is a farm" – and I was like 'wow'...like he's communicating, but he's also using his reading words and showed for once that he really understood what was going on, what was being discussed in the presentation and, I almost cried right then and there. I was just like 'Oh my God! Oh my God! Did anybody else see that?', you know?! It was very significant, and he really started using sign after that point to communicate with us – beyond just using it for reading; so, that was one.

And then, my other favorite was just this summer. I was sitting and doing something on the computer and, actually my i-phone, and a Facebook message came up from a student who has moved to Florida, and he wrote, 'Thinking of you. Just wanted to let you know what a difference you made in my life'. And this, I – the fact that he spelled it all correctly (and I work with Educational Life Skill kids) so he was probably more "Learning Opportunity" kid (LOP), but he still took the time to just send me a Facebook message saying that what I had done was important to him, or was meaningful. You know, it was just, I was like, I burst into tears sitting right there – you know which is my default mechanism when I get excited or happy. And, you know, was just like 'great',

you know, I find, you know, I, sometimes with my students you don't get a lot of feedback and so it was, it was a real tangible, and I still have it on my phone.

R: Those are both absolutely wonderful and very powerful stories of how you have definitely made a difference for kids – that is amazing. Thank you for sharing...outstanding. **How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?**

I1: Well, I think, for my kids you need a lot of space and when I say space I mean they need room to move, they need room to experience what they're learning so that, you know, my kinesthetic learners can use, you know, that and they can...I have kids that have proprioceptive problems, I have kids that have auditory problems, visual problems, so a great big white board that they can interact with ...and, actually I have a lot of these things; a white board, i-pads, but also, light tech. materials (the manipulatives, the calculators). I think that...I'm in the high school, but I think the minute a kid gets into an educational system, if they are nonverbal, they should have a voice output system. I have a problem with the fact that they say "Oh, this kid throws" or "this kid does this" and the behaviors stop them from having a device, and I think every kid should have a device because you don't cover a kid's mouth when they're two years old because they go "ba-ba-ba-ba-ba". You teach them that "ba-ba-ba" means "bottle", or "baby", or "banana" and you teach them the language and, you know, kids throw tantrums even if they're using words. Behavior is just vocabulary that a kid uses when they have no other way of communicating. So, I think they should all have a device from the beginning, and learn because you're teaching them language. So that would be ideal.

R: That does sound ideal...that sounds wonderful. **In terms of staffing, in a classroom, what do you see as being an ideal staffing type of model for students?**

I1: I think it really has to do with the needs of your students. First off, I think all staff should be, paraprofessionals should have more training than they get, because many of them walk in and although their heart is in the right place they don't really know what they're doing. I think that an ideal learning situation would be two teachers in a classroom, so you could team-teach, and therefore you have instead of maybe extra paraprofessionals, but you have an actual two teachers. And then, that also helps in my situation with being able to teach to your strengths (some people just are naturally better at math) that's why in most grade schools. In high schools there's a math teacher and a science teacher and reading teacher and they're not all lumped together. I think that, let's see...training...I don't think you need one-to-one. Because, I think when you have one-to-one for every special needs you take away independence, and that's one of the problems with having too many adults in a classroom. It also, I find, fosters people discovering behaviors that really aren't behaviors. In a regular ed. class nobody would ever notice that Johnny picks his nose in the corner, but in my classroom, you know, "Oh my God, he picked his nose!" Well, yeah, because you're all watching him. So, too much one-to-one is not good either. But I think it really kind of depends on your class size and the disabilities of your students. You know there's no one magic formula.

R: Yeah...yeah; very insightful; thank you - excellent. So we have pretty much the best imaginable, so then, **how would you envision the worst imaginable type of a classroom learning environment for students?**

I1: Oh, I've had them! The worst...staff that, staff that's focused on what is wrong with the students instead of right with the students - right; staff who does not understand that behaviors are communication. You know?

R: Yes! They are.

I1: Yeah, and that the ultimate goal is not...I am not a huge believer in the behavior, the positive behavior systems of you know, giving out stars and cookies and whatever. Most of us live our lives getting rewarded by the intrinsic good feeling that we have for doing what is right or completing a task and that most kids won't complete a task not because they just don't want to but because they can't or don't know how to. And, it's our job to find out what they need to make sure that they can complete what they need to do. So the staffs that are only looking for what is wrong and, you know "Oh, he just is lazy" or you know, that, it's not he's just lazy there's something that is breaking down in between. I don't like the punitive staff, I don't like ...I believe in a positive atmosphere. I don't like negative comments. I like to reinforce positive behaviors – verbally, you know, high fives, and you know "great jobs" and you know "I see how hard you're working" and letting them know not just "Wow, you did a great job painting", "Oh, that's a beautiful painting", but I like, "Look at all the reds and blues you used" so that they know what was, what was good about what they did as opposed to this vague – because my kids need more literal translation. You know, they'll say you know "His...your behavior is just terrible", and I'm like but what did that mean? You know, I don't know what you mean by his behavior; he was yelling, he was hitting, he was spitting...you have to be concrete. So, I think those are really the negative. The negative

is what I really dislike in the environment. It just ruins my whole day and doesn't help the kids in any way.

R: I would agree with you...I would agree with you. How would you propose stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, and legislators), how would you propose that they bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?

I1: First off, I feel that every administrator and legislator should be in a classroom, and not just for, you know, they pop in, you know, and they catch , you know, teachers are on their best behavior, but you need to stay around long enough to catch what a classroom is really about. You know, if you're there a whole day you're going to see the whole gamut of behaviors. After, after a while the students will forget that there's a visitor in the classroom...when they first walk-in you know they're beautiful little angels and they don't see what we actually do all day long. And, I think, another way to, to bridge the gap, is we have to stop blaming the parents, you know, the assumptions lots of time in my group is that , their, you know my group of disabilities, is that well "the parents aren't working on the behavior", "parents are just giving in" but you know, the reality is to a parent, all of us sometimes give in because it just makes our life easier and all of us have bad days and I was fortunate not to have a special needs child so maybe my bad day wasn't as bad as their bad day is . We've kind of lost the empathy towards what really somebody's life is like and I think that we have to...it has to be a better dialogue somewhere along the way where you know just buying i-pads for a classroom isn't the answer. It's not necessarily going to educate kids any better – trust me it's very helpful and there's lots of ways to use it but that doesn't change the bottom-line outcome for our

students. The real change comes from when we work together on the behavior plan, on the, on the outcomes that we want for the kids and it's not an adversarial "Well, it's your fault" or "It's your fault". It's really us all working together.

R: Absolutely wonderful sentiments. I just...I'm so impressed. Truly what you are sharing is absolutely touching my heart – touching on themes of accountability, empathy and compassion, and collaboration – just absolutely everything that you are talking about resonates very deeply with me. So, thank you for that.

I1: Oh, good!

R: How would you define or describe an equitable education?

I1: Okay, can you define what you mean by equitable education, or what you're looking at?

R: Here is my sense of what I would believe and what I would propose to think about what an equitable education for students would be, that: an equitable education could be defined as students of all skill levels and abilities consistently achieving and performing in a manner or a way that honors their particular learning profile.

I1: Okay. Well, one way, that I would describe an equitable education is one that does not necessarily include testing to norms that may or may not be achievable - certainly for my population. We take away all children's ability to be problem solvers by thinking that having a test and answering a question determines whether or not they learned something or didn't learn something. Because, I have students who walked in my classroom freshman year, and couldn't open up a locker, put their stuff away and come into my classroom and now can, and that was a huge growth and learning opportunity. I think that all students should be given the opportunity to be in a situation where they can

attempt to learn whatever is most valuable for them in that situation. So, if I have a student who is going into an art class and they're doing still life drawings, and what my student is learning that drawing lines or drawing a circle, which are prewriting skills, that it's still valuable...even if it's not drawing that exact still life. And that, that eye-hand coordination, the fine motor skill that they get out of it is equally important for them as it is for the student who drew this absolutely beautiful bowl of fruit that they had put in front of them and if my students can even name the fruit, or tell me what shape the fruit is in, or what color...so, that's a win. That is, that's equitable learning to me.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting?

I1: Wow...my training...after many years, I've had multiple trainings, whether it was classes on autism, or hearing impaired signing classes, or back in the days when the first augmentative communication devices came out, you know. I think, I think all of those things helped me become a better teacher. I think that, that supporting students for me really...I don't know how to put this...kind of like a gut reaction. And I think that's partially from the professional experience – being in it long enough that you may see trends or things that you've seen before and you have a bag of knowledge to pull, pull out some of your tricks - which doesn't mean you don't go back and try to find a new bag to dig in to. I think that, that you never can stop learning about it. And you have to be flexible, because nothing ever stays the same and educational practices certainly don't. They didn't start out one way...when I started there were no augmentative communication, there were no computers... we Xeroxed everything...not

Xeroxed....dittos, to you know, you know, everything was handmade there was no curriculum- there was no special ed. curriculum. You created everything from start to finish so you have to be willing to change, and supporting a student I believe that you, you have to be flexible.

R: Absolutely. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students?

I1: Well, like I said, you know when I went for the training on autism although there were certain things that I had already been aware of, the training gave me a lot of other ideas on how it wouldn't just be successful for the autistic kids that I might get, but also for the other children. I, I'm a true believer in thematic learning. It, I think it's why my students tend to do very well, and I think it's because I talk about things all day long and they always are touching on either things we've learned or things we're going to learn or things that they know about and – if it's in math and we're talking about ...triangles and then we're doing a science experiment and we see a triangle then we talk about the triangles again and then, you know, in reading – you know, let's sit in a triangle when we do it, and then we might read about the triangles. So, I try and weave it in throughout my day...so it's, so no one knows that I'm actually still talking about the same mathematical concept 'cause I'm doing it somewhere else in a different manner, and I think that's, you know, been very important to accommodate and modify for my students.

My accommodations can go from: filling in the black, to stickers to fill-in-the-blanks, to picking out the correct lollipop stick that has answers on it, to having them

color-coded to help them see the difference; to using an iPad to answer the questions, to verbally answering the questions, to signing the questions. Some kids will answer cloze activities 'cause they can find the word bank; other kids will have a sentence and have to write a sentence. Some might have a paragraph; some of my kids can't write at all, so they have to find the sentence, you know, in the list of, of things we're doing. Some of them may just have to find the answer and highlight it in the text so that we know that they can find the information.

R: How would you say you've learned how to do all of these things?

I1: Some of it's trial and error. Some of it's watching other people. Some of it are, what my staff will say is, "Mrs. _____ woke up in the middle of the night and went 'Ohhhhhh, guess what I just came up with!'" you know? And, I don't know why, but something will just pop in my head and go...an example would be, I have a student who eats too much, and he will shove everything in to his face and, you know, you can try and give him one at a time, but then he's not learning self-regulation. And, if you just leave it in front of him then you're constantly having a battle. And, I was changing my friend's baby and I pulled one of the diapers out, the wipes out of the diaper thing and I pulled one and I pulled another one and I went, "Ohh". And then, I grabbed, I said, "Can I have your empty one?". I washed it out - I filled the box with the amount of snacks that he could have....which was a half a cup and I put 'em in. And so he had to reach his...he had to close the box, he had to open the box, he had to put his hand in, he had to pull it out - which was very difficult because it was a fine motor thing, and then, but he could only pull one out at a time because his hands were too big holding on to it, and then he would get one and then he had to close the box. And so, we slowed him down

considerably now. He never figured out to open the box, which was a good thing, and it wasn't complete self-regulation, but at the beginning we had to say, "close the box", "just take one", and now he opens the box, takes one, closes the box, eats one – chews it up, goes....opens his mouth so we can see that he doesn't have - it's no more left, and then goes and repeats the process. So, he is starting to regulate it even though we've put kind of a control on it. And, the bottom-line is, when it's time for snack, he goes and he gets the box and brings it to us. So, he even finds a value in that it slows him down. It's like he knows that he can't control it, and so he's like here, please, you know, yeah, so.

Accommodations come in all sorts of ...

R: ...don't they? Absolutely; all personalized for each kiddo that needs whatever specific modification is required.

I1: Yep!

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students?

I1: Some of our curricular modifications have been built in by curriculum that they've provided for us. So, using things like: News to You, or Equals Math, or PCI Reading. Some of the curricular accommodations - I'll walk into, my kids go into elective classes, so I'll go in to the cooking teacher and I'll take their curriculum and then it becomes our modification, you know... Velcro and stickers, and reduction in number of questions. Sometimes it's done with the support of the teacher, sometimes they just hand it off and go "do whatever you want", but we will, we will change it to whatever fits the needs of the students. My kids, now, I've been in this same program – it's my ninth year,

so the first year I walked in and I created the cooking class and although the cooking class now changes slightly the basics of: yeast bread, and non-rising bread, and quick breads, and you know, measurement...all of those remain the same, the only difference is, do I, do I have the color-coded, you know, teaspoons and tablespoons for that, for that one kid? Or, can they do it with, you know, without any kind of support. So, it all depends, but we pretty much have built some of 'em – some of the classes, so that, that the, the modifications and accommodations are already taken care of.

R: That's sounds wonderful. And, do you find that the general education teachers – or the teachers that are providing the primary instruction during those courses- are they receptive to the accommodations and modifications that you're providing? Are they willing to follow through with their implementation?

I1: They absolutely, they're thrilled that there's something 'cause they don't know what to do, and then also, all of my students have a, uh assistant, a para-pro that goes in with them – depending on how many students, depends on how many para-pros go into the classroom, but at least one for every two students. And, we try and group them so that they're maybe a higher-level and a lower-level, so that even the higher-level can help the lower-level kid, or possibly work independently with the regular ed students where the para-pro gets more support .

R: Do you find when your students are given those kinds of opportunities within a general education environment, with the assistants, or the paraprofessionals, that their peers as well as the other adults in that environment come to feel more comfortable with your students?

II: Absolutely. Yes – yes. You know, it certainly depends on the amount of disability that my students have. So, the more disabled they are, the more visually disabled, the more behaviorally disabled- the more difficulty there is, but most of the time... There's been some new teachers... we had an art teacher who was very, "this student yells out" you know, and what she didn't realize was the student was trying to answer questions but she doesn't have good verbal skills so she was screaming out her answers, and she thought "oh, she's just yelling". So, once we worked with the student on how to appropriately raise her hand and answer the questions -even though she didn't answer anything correctly and, and it still didn't make any sense to the teacher, she could at least say, "Oh, thank you so much, I really liked your point of view", or you know, "You're right! I see that it's green, also" you know, and what happens is now the students are, are more willing and accepting; the more the adults are, the more the students are.

R: Absolutely; it is my sense that sometimes the children in the classroom need to see that kind of modeling...in how to interact with an individual who might be multiply impaired, or presents with very disabling impairments. I think that kids are unfamiliar, and they don't necessarily have those experiences at home or in the community activities they participate in, and so by seeing an adult who is willing to engage and interact, and even if it is just complimenting that student on their willingness to want to participate and to share– it is valuing that individual to a certain degree that all the other students then have that opportunity to see that modeled behavior – and can do the same.

II: And the other thing that's quite interesting is that when they see that the adult finds the value, my students' self-esteem goes up and what happens is, they start realizing what these kids can do as opposed to what they can't do.

R: Yes – very powerful. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success?

II: Well, data, data, data – and we take a lot of it. And, to the point that sometimes people forget why they’re taking the data, and sometimes- certainly with behaviors, they’re looking at the data to confirm what they already have believed, as opposed to trying to see the growth the student’s making. And so, “You know, he hit his head five times today.” You know, well “Yes, but he was hitting it twelve times yesterday, and we reduced the number – isn’t that awesome?” You know, so, we, in my classroom, like I said, I’m not big on the positive behavior system – I don’t believe in, you know, a cookie for every, every time you do something good. But, because I am working with high school students, I, I chose to use money. And so, we give out money for appropriate behaviors and appropriate, you know, if you do something extra special – you know, you get a bonus – just like you would in a job...not in teaching, but in other jobs. And so, and then at the end of the week they can shop; and, I’m fortunate to have a brother and sister-in-law who have what I like to call a “tchotchke business”. So, I’ve got a lot of jewelry, and scarves and stuff, and they can pick, and you know pick stuff for themselves. We also encourage them buying stuff for mom’s birthday so that it’s not just about getting something for yourself, but getting for others. But, I, I specifically do it, that they get, they get paid throughout the week and, and it also has become a savings plan – you can save your money, you can spend your money - you can, you know, save part of it, save part of it so it’s math, and also consumer education and, at the end of the week they get to make that choice. And so, although they have kind of a reward – not

much of a reward for some of ‘em because it’s just fake dollars, but at the end of the week, you know, if they get a ring – you know and especially if they’ve saved- and my prices are outrageous, you know, I’m like the Needless Mark-up of the classroom, you know, so you know it’s a little, fake bauble and I’m, “It’s \$150.00”, you know, but they’ll save. You know, if they really want it they’ll save for it, you know, and then they walk out, and they’re so proud that they saved their money – that their behavior was good. It’s not really that kind of, you know, “you didn’t earn your three checks today” because, at some point they’ve been caught being good and they’re getting some sort of money.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education)?

I1: I do my best to follow policies that I have been given, most of the time. I do tend to be a little rebel – they instituted a core vocabulary program that every single student was supposed to participate in and, there was no way I was gonna do it. It went against all my better judgment. And I went, and I talked to them about how I felt about communication devices – but you don’t give me a board, a static board that it has 193 words and tell me that my students, who are verbal communicators and have been their entire life, and speak at, at least, a sixth grade level should be using this board to communicate. Or, well, “Let’s now use it to write” you know. When, my kid, kids walk in and say things like, “Hey, Mrs. _____, you know, uh, what’d you watch last night?”, “You know, I watched the ‘Walking Dead’”, “Oh my God! Those zombies are just incredible!” “You know, he had that dripping face...” and they go into these full descriptions and I’m gonna use a board that’s ‘he, she...’ and, they don’t even have half

the vocabulary that my students would use and I'm being told I should be doing lessons on 'put it in' and 'take it out' – I won't do it. That being said, I put the core boards out with my lower level students. I did use it with my lower level students and I did model it with my higher level students so that they could use it with my lower level students but, they were not required to use it in the same manner because even my lowest kids, if I said, "Can you put that in the sink?", would've walked over and put it in the sink. So, I mean, it wasn't helping them verbalize...so, on those kinds of things, I do my best to comply, while being non-compliant.

R: Absolutely – you work within the parameters of the system to ensure that you're following the rules, but are still able to subvert some of the lesser important ways of things that they're putting upon you.

I1: Yes – I try to...right.

R: I really appreciate, very much, what you have shared today. There were just a few questions on your survey that I was hoping you could provide some clarification on. I have a greater sense myself of why you would have replied in a certain way – one of the questions I was wondering about was a question in the survey where you had indicated that you felt placement of students should be based on where their skill abilities are and what is best for them. So, the best placement for the child is obviously not necessarily what's best for the school district, but really looking at what the students' needs are and ensuring we are making their needs met, whether it's in a large group environment, small group environment, self-contained, included...

I1: And that...that does not mean, for me, that a kid stays self-contained all day, you know. But, do I think it's appropriate to put my student who doesn't know 1:1

correspondence in a trigonometry class? No. Do I think it's okay to put her in a... applied math class where they're talking about numbers? Maybe; you know, depending on socially...depending on where the students are in that class...depending on what other things she can gain from it, then it might be an appropriate placement. But, to say "no"...I mean, I had a boy who was in a, in applied math class, and I talked to the teacher today, she said, "Oh, am I getting any of your other students/" and I said, "None of them are as high" and she said, "He could've taught the class". He was that good at it, but he took two years. Because the first year he didn't do very well, and he really couldn't move on 'cause the skills, the next set of skills were too difficult for him; he conceptually, when we tested them on him, just didn't get it, and he kind of - I don't want to say peaked, but it kind of got to the point that it was now becoming frustrating and not to his benefit. Whereas, for once, he was in a class where he wasn't the lowest kid - he was actually the highest, and, and even though he repeated it, it was a perfect match for him to be in that class. He didn't even need the aide, but they insisted he go in.

R: Wonderful...wow. Now given that, of the survey questions, I had put down: The general education environment is the preferred setting for all students. And you replied, you agree. Would you say you personally agree with that sentiment, or in general – that administrators, parents...that they prefer the general education environment?

II: No, no...I do not think administrators do because they can skew their numbers, and that's the last thing they want, you know. If you have, you know, your regular ed. classes and you're taking the standardized testing and you have one kid who doesn't just quite make it - then, no, they don't want it. The teacher, the regular ed. teachers rarely want it. As I said though, that doesn't mean...it's the preferred place, but

that doesn't mean it's the best place. So, I may think, you know, certainly I have kids who math and reading forget it, but I, you could put 'em into a social studies class and they would understand the concepts, you know. Even if you change the concepts- I mean most of 'em can understand, you know, the Civil War...what was it, you know, what was it, you know. They may not remember the dates, but they could learn about the people in the Civil War and some of the broad concepts in the Civil War and when they're out in the real world and er...the real world...high school community...and the kids are talking about "Oh, the social studies test", and, well we just learned about, you know... oh just, you know like "God, we had that test on the Civil War" and they go "Oh yeah, Robert E. Lee" you know...They have a point of reference that's similar to the people that they're in school with and therefore less different. As opposed to they have no idea because they didn't study that, you know. They, you know, they're juniors and they know nothing about American history, even though that's a standard, you know, junior year class...they know nothing about that.

R: They finally have some cultural capital to be able to interact with their peers with.

I1: Yes, yes...yeah.

R: Do you find that people tend to privilege the general education environment? If you don't look at placement; because obviously there is a continuum...do you feel like when you're sitting with your parents in meetings that the expectation, maybe in the past or what they're hoping for the future, is to be in that "normal" classroom?

I1: Usually, it really...kind of depends on the realistic goals of the parents. I, I just recently, in fact before I walked in here, I was on the phone with a mother who believes that her daughter is going to go to college and become a teacher. Her I.Q. is 60

or below – she’s reading at about a first grade level...math is somewhere around the same; looks like a typical teenager, verbally can probably pass for a short amount of time in a conversation and then she kind of has immature emotional needs. So, she’s very much into like One Direction, but like, like a ten/twelve year old would be into One Direction. And, we joked that I’m the “dream crusher” because by senior year I have to explain to her- you know, she can work in a preschool as an assistant, or maybe be a counselor in training at, you know, some of the camps, or you know if we teach her skills enough that she’s really good you know maybe babysit. But that she’s not going to go and be a teacher like you and I are teachers. And, you don’t want to crush their dreams, but the reality is she’s not going to become a teacher. I’ve had a kid said their goal was to be a cashier, they can...you know. Back prior to this classroom, I was a physical handicap itinerant- so I worked all with kids with physical disabilities. And, one of my previous students is a...is going for her master’s degree in social work...wheelchair bound, verbal, always very bright, but you know she was told what she couldn’t do and I always said you can. So I’m not willing, I’m not unwilling to push when a kid can do it, but I’m also not willing to put false hopes out for parents, administrators, or whatever, you know. I will do everything that I can to get a child to be as successful as they can be. I will, I will reach way beyond what most people will think that a kid can do and I’ll be really happy with wherever they get, but I’m not gonna be, you know, crazy and say, “Okay, yeah, sure, no problem...you could be a doctor”. Or, my CP kid who wanted to be a police officer... “You’re not gonna carry a gun – you can’t. You, you have athetosis – your, your limbs flail all over – you can’t have a gun!”, you know. But, we made a joke out of it and then we talked about well what kinds of things could he do within a police

department, and then start looking at realistic goals for them. So, I think that's really, you know, it's really important that, you know, when we look at kids and where they are within the educational process just putting 'em in a regular ed. class because you want something is not necessarily the best way, but finding ways for them to be within the regular education system to the best of their ability, I think is always the preferred mode.

R: Absolutely. Can you tell me, what has your experience been, or what are your thoughts on community support services and service agencies once kids transition out of high school?

II: There's not a lot out there, and I was just talking to my husband about this yesterday...I don't know if you've seen, there's a, a you tube about a dad in Florida, I believe, who started a car wash for his son who has autism, and every kid that works there is autistic. And, he did it so his son would have a job. And then, there's another woman, I don't know where she's at, who bought an old, run-down, movie theater, renovated it, and now her Down syndrome sister and all the special needs kids work there – from taking the money, making the popcorn, cleaning the aisles. And, they show movies, you know, so it's a real thing. We need more of that. We need places for kids of, of, you know, with disabilities, to have a place so that they can feel like a, a member of society – so they're not just getting social security, so that their parents aren't, you know, having to, some of 'em you know don't have the money to put into a trust so that when they're gone that there's gonna be money so that they're supported and they don't fall through the cracks. We need a better system, you know.

Manufacturing jobs used to be abundant in the United States and people with low-level education or low I.Q.s could work there. One of my favorite...I go to Mariano's

now - I go to Mariano's by my house...there's fifteen different grocery stores- Whole Foods and Jewel and Sunset Foods, and I go to Mariano's because they hire...all the special needs kids are the baggers, you know. And, just the fact that, I mean they do at Jewel too, but the, the outpour of special needs kids that have been put into this brand new store that just opened showed me their commitment to, to helping the community and helping this population, and that just means so much to me because I spend four years of these kids' lives trying to get them to be as independent and successful as possible, you know...the most amount of skills before they walk out my door and go into transition, and, you know, depending on what classroom they came from or what, what philosophy of the school that they came from depends on how hard I have to work to get that independence level, or their reading level up, or their math skills, you know, and then I think "Once they leave me, where do they go?" ...they go to transition. And, you know, they stop doing the reading because they're working on life skills, you know. And then, okay so four years we worked on reading and what happened to all those words that we took so long to teach 'em - even if it's just for the joy of reading? And then, "Where are you gonna go with it?", and "What kind of job are you gonna get?", "What are you gonna do with your life?" -you know... 'cause there's a big, you know, you know...jobs are hard enough to get for "normal", "regular", "typical" people, right? So, yeah, makes me worried.

R: Absolutely...yeah. Another question on the survey inquired as to whether you prefer to collaborate with school-based therapeutic practitioners in a 1:1 type format, a small group format, or a large group format. You indicated that you would rather not have any

type of professional development or interaction with your therapists in a smaller group or a 1:1 environment. **Can you clarify that?**

II: I mean, I do collaborate one to one so I guess I might've misunderstood the question, or I wasn't thinking, at that time. I collaborate with my, my staff and like my O.T. – we'll discuss what we're doing, you know, what theme I'm working on, so we're, we're talking about ...the Civil War – I'll use that. So, then we talk about what kind of things can we do with the Civil War...so, what kind of O.T. things can we do, you know, and we're not talking about just writing about it, but really creating. And so, we'll create Civil War hats, we'll create Civil War... so it's the cutting, it's the tracing, it's the measuring – like I said, thematic, you know. For some of 'em it's, "Which is the yellow paper and which is the blue paper?", you know, okay, and then "Who, who wore, you know, grey and who wore, you know, gold?". So, you know, then it becomes those kind of things and it becomes a thematic unit. And, we'll work together. I'd like to do more push-in than pull-out. I think that even with my population that there's still that stigma of being removed, you know. Now, it's one thing when they're going to a, a class 'cause they're like "I'm goin' to art!", you know, and then the kids who don't go to art are usually...my freshmen don't go out - we give 'em a year because it's, it takes three/six months to figure them out and, and work with them. And then, there's only so much staff – so I can't send everybody out because I, I would have nobody in my classroom to support, you know, working on the academic skills. So, it's also kind of something that they earn and so they get to look forward to it. So, anything that we do in my classroom, I feel that they can come in and be a part of the class and get their skills met without pulling them out and having them miss whatever lesson we're doing or stop doing

whatever the group is doing, or... that being said, it may be a large group that we break into to small groups to do that same whole project- in fact, many times that's exactly what we do. We'll have...we'll have...like this year I have twelve kids, so I might have three groups of four, or four groups of three, you know, depending on how many staff are in the room. So, it, it is kind of a small group activity. But, I, I, I do like to collaborate – I just don't like them yankin' my kids and working...

R: So, you would prefer therapists to come in the classroom, work with your kids in the classroom, facilitating so everyone can see what the therapists are doing...

I1: Exactly!

R: ...then, other staff can follow through with the same exact kinds of practices...

I1: Exactly! Yeah...thank you...yes. Because, here's one of the best things...I had a P.T. who would come in and she would do whatever she did with the one student, and she might've told one of the assistants- who never shared it with the rest of us. So, none of us were giving the verbal cue that, that the student needed, and the posture was terrible and had it just been that she had been working in our classroom and saying, you know, "Push down on your right" or "Lift" you know, "Lift and, and separate" we would have done it on a daily basis.

R: Just like the teacher modeling the behavior of interaction with a student, praising a student with needs...having a practitioner in the classroom, who has provided a cuing support system for a student- to model that behavior for the other staff, and then everybody is capable of doing it.

I1: Exactly...theoretically...

R: In the policy vein, I had included the question: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, or IDEA) is a relevant and necessary policy. And, you agree with that sentiment. **Can you share a little bit more about your thoughts on IDEIA – if you feel like it’s protecting your students; if you have any criticisms of IDEA; or, is it just a document in place that you follow along with the guidelines?**

II: I think it’s very helpful that everybody has a guideline to follow along – a basic document. I, there’s been enough times that I’ve had to walk in and say, “No, you have to have my student” or, “you need to follow these practices” you know ... “Well, I don’t want this student”, “I don’t, I shouldn’t have to modify it”... “You don’t have to modify it, I will modify it, but it needs to be modified. This is part of his IEP, and therefore it will be done and this is how we’re going to do it. We can do it together. I can do it myself, but it will be modified” or, “He will sit in front” or, you know, whatever it is. So, having the law behind you or the, the IDEA behind you, I think is very important. Do I, do I rely on it? No... I mean, it’s kind of like most policies, you know. They’re, they’re there for, for a guideline really more than anything.

R: Very nice...another survey question: My school district has sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of its students. And, your response was: strongly disagree.

Would you care to elaborate on that sentiment?

II: Okay. So, _____ high school does. The school district I’m in has money – not unlimited funds, and they will be, you know, cutting back in their own time. - _____ is having financial difficulties and reducing. Most of my students - let’s see, this year it’s 70% of my students- come from _____. They do not have a program for this population, so they’re bussed to me. Those parents have nothing. Most of ‘em

have been on welfare for...ever, and they have nothing. So, _____, you know, the director of special ed. used to be with _____, one of the many...I've worked with most of them for eighteen/sixteen years...so I know these people...and they try. When I have a kid who really needs a device- we may jump through hoops, but if a kid really needs a device and they, and they see the benefit they will get it for 'em. I'm also the first one to say, "This does not work for this kid", so maybe that's one of the reasons they do what they can when I'm, when I'm requesting things. And, they know that I'm gonna go the extra mile. Because, it's not about me, it's about the kids.

So, but there is a lack of money and, you know, obviously none of, none of the people I know went into education because we were gonna become rich doing it...and, there's, there's, there's not a toilet paper roll that goes out of my house that isn't stuck in my bag that's being taken to school for something that we're gonna make, at some point, 'cause I know that whatever it is. And, I know that they can't afford to give me all the supplies and all the things. So, we write the grants, you know, and you do the extra paperwork, and you find the people who will donate whatever they can...and that's how you get around it. So, no, they don't have the money for us, you know. And, the kids that have the greatest amount of need, seem to get the least.

R: Absolutely, I would agree...I would agree. Well, thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need of clarification.

Appendix F: Interview #2**Key:****R: Researcher****I2: Interviewee**

R: Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

R: Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

R: When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

I2: Well, I can remember my first year in third grade, and I had a student that struggled with math, and he also struggled a lot in confidence in being in the classroom. So, I spent a lot of time getting to know him and his interests; I offered to help by tutoring him afterschool. So, I spent a lot of time with him...like once or twice a week-afterschool, getting to know him and his math needs, and trying to build his confidence in

the classroom. And, I also spent a lot of time communicating with his mom, who, you know, was very appreciative and was excited that he was willing to stay with me and work after school to get, you know, to get better at the skills that he needed to and progress in math. And, the reason that I know I made a difference in his life was because by the end of the year he had gained so much more confidence; he was excelling in math- you know, he started to have a better grasp of the concepts, was able to answer questions in the classroom, was more confident in his test taking skills...and then, he also, to this day, he still comes to me and acknowledges me at the beginning of every school year. His mom reaches out to me at the beginning of every school year to tell me to have a great year, and is always very encouraging as a teacher- like, is very supportive and you know, to this day, I still have a great relationship with them- all three of her, like, well, two of her sons and her. So, yeah, I feel that I did really make a difference with that particular student because I spent that extra time just really getting to know him, making sure that I spent five minutes you know like out of each day sitting with him just to make sure that he was feeling comfortable that day, what could I help him with, and really making sure that I kept open communication with mom and had all of those kind of things, you know, going for him. That, you know, I feel like that was a student that I really made a difference in his life- because to this day, that he can still come back to me and, you know, acknowledge me every year and wish me good luck on my following class and those kind of things, I know that I really helped him succeed. So, it was great.

R: Very nice...what a wonderful story. Thank you for sharing; very nice. How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?

I2: Okay, I...well, first and foremost, I believe that the environment where students come should be warm and inviting...caring. I think that, I think that teachers need to, you know, make sure that they have a genuine interest in the students' well-being...not only their well-being, but their education, as well. Because I think that a teacher who is so rigid and, you know, does not show interest in their personal life really doesn't make that connection with the students to, to really get them to feel comfortable in the classroom. I think, you know, I want all the students to be able to take risks, in their education and to be, to know that making a mistake is okay...but that's how we learn, and that, you know, that it's okay to express your feelings and, you know, if you have a concern or whatever, I want the kids to feel comfortable to coming to me to do that. Obviously, I think, you know, and that's just more of the learning environment, you know. I think that developing mutual respect between teachers and students is really important, as well. You know, obviously, there's the physical things like the resources...you want to have plentiful resources. You want to have those things, but I think teachers, by making the best of what they have is...you have to be able to adapt to what you have. Whether you teach in the inner city, or a very wealthy school district, you need to make sure that you can use what you have to, you know, adapt and be able to serve every kid's needs. So, I think, you know, just having that and also, too, I think, you know, as much as you can, having parental involvement in a classroom looks really great in an ideal classroom, you know. I think it's so important to have that home-school connection with kids and parents. I, you know, I want parents to be involved in their education and to be able to come in and watch their kid's learning and growing and, you know, see that development. I also think, you know, obviously in an ideal world, yes it

would be great to have an assistant in a classroom with a large number of students, especially when we're at like 28-30 kids right now- that would be very helpful, because, you know, I mean, I'm not an octopus, and you can only do so much. I mean, you try your best to accommodate every student, but for, to have- that's why I also think the parental involvement is also very key. To have parents come in to be able to work with small groups of kids, and to reinforce those skills that you can't always get to everyone, like, you know, so...yeah, that would be my ideal learning environment. I think that, you know, you definitely want the kids to be, to have that, really good connection with you as a teacher and a rapport that they can feel comfortable, like I said, to take risks and to ask questions, and to not be afraid, and I don't want them to have, you know, fear of being able to stand up in front of their peers and share and, you know, you want them to be able to have all of those comforts of being in the classroom.

R: That absolutely sounds like an ideal learning environment; it sounds wonderful.

Conversely, how do you envision then the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

I2: So, basically, I would say, obviously everything I said earlier would be sort of the opposite of those kind of things. Obviously, lack of resources can be, can be tricky, but like I said, I think teachers need to learn to use what they have to make the environment what, you know, as best they can. I do think that a confidence-crushing teacher is, is not an ideal learning environment for kids- you don't want to crush their spirit, their confidence...you want somebody who's engaging with the kids. A teacher who is so set on, you know, direct instruction all the time, and not student-centered, you know, I feel like doesn't allow the kids to grow and learn. So you want, you know,

instead of having that just robotic-like teacher that's standing up in front of the classroom all the time, you know, that's not very ideal. You know, uninvolved parents can be tricky, too I think- like I said I, it's great to have involved parents- so, a community of people who are involved in the classroom. If they're not involved, I think, I think it, you know, it's not so positive for the kids...you know especially even administration. You want administration that's loving, and caring, and involved...and, present; you want them present and visible and, if they're not I think that kids get this, this idea that the principal is bad, or, you know, it's almost like a police officer. If, you know, they see, they always have this stigma kinda like "Oh" but, I, you know, "the principal's a bad person because I go there if I'm bad". But I, you know, you want that to be a positive rather than a negative. Let's see...what else... I think, you know, students who are disrespectful creates a negative learning environment, as well as kids who are, you know, bullies. And, you know, just basically a restricted learning environment...you want, you want the kids to feel open and free, and be able to learn and to have that positive. So, I just, I feel that, you know, the teacher makes a big difference in the classroom, too – in establishing those relationships, and if you can't establish those relationships, I feel like that leads to a real negative learning environment.

R: Very insightful...very insightful, thank you. How would you propose stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, and legislators), how would you propose that they bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?

I2: Right. I think that by providing professional development that allows teachers to really get a, more of a hands-on kind of feel, maybe going into classrooms where that

ideal learning environment is visible. To see and to observe – because I think so much of what we see in the school setting is like collaboration among teachers and I think that if, you know, teachers can be flexible in seeing other people's techniques and ways of doing things without feeling criticized and without thinking that they're wrong all the time, but to learn and grow, and be able to realize that maybe something they're doing is not creating the most optimal learning environment and to be able to, you know, understand that and just view something else that could help them, you know, become a better teacher and to be, create that better learning environment.

I also think that there needs to be more parent education, for parents. I know that's really tricky to be able to encourage parents to even come to meetings that take place after school or in the evening, but I think that if parents were more involved in the type of learning environment that they want their children to be in, as far as creating that respect between teachers and students, and explaining to them, you know, that there needs to, there needs to be that respect and rapport to learn, but that the parents also need to be on-board with that and to give them the tips and tools to help their student feel like they can be comfortable in the classroom but maintain that respect and also understand that while they're in their classroom, you know, they need to be ready to learn, but also to respect their teacher in a way that's not, you know, crossing those boundaries of, you know, kind of like the bad behaviors and those kind of things. I think that, I think the hardest part of this question is because people are not very flexible in changing their ways and also, change is really hard for a lot of people, and I think that in order to go from a teacher who has maybe has not the best learning environment for their students to a learning environment that is more acceptable is really hard for somebody who has been

so set in their ways and is not flexible at adapting to some of the changes that need to be made, you know, to create a better learning environment for their students. So, I think, you know, I mean, obviously administration has to be on board with that to provide the professional development, teachers have to be willing and I think that's really hard for some people to have that feeling of 'it's okay to be flexible and to learn and to grow' - when they're so set in their ways they don't really wanna make that, those changes.

R: Very nice. How would you define or describe an equitable education?

I2: So, for me, I think that all students deserve an education obviously that provides opportunities, I feel like, for their advancement. So, not that everything- I know there's so many different versions of equality and...but, if you're a teacher in a classroom and you are teaching those students to the, to the best of your ability and you are providing opportunities for every student in your classroom to advance to that next step- whatever that next step is for their learning. So, if they are, you know, differentiated curriculum, and just providing situations that are real life experiences for them and engagement that they're gonna become successful citizens in society so that they can have those opportunities to do what they want to do. Whether that's, you know, become a hairstylist or a doctor...it doesn't matter. You just need to give them the opportunities to fuel, like, and ignite that passion whatever it is in them...so that they can move to that next step and develop and, you know, find what, what they are good at and find what they are strong at...find what they want to, you know, do in their life, and you know they may not know that in elementary school but, you are giving them those resources and those opportunities and those methods of thinking to keep them moving toward those next steps.

R: Very nice. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting?

I2: Well, for the twelve years that I have been teaching, I feel that...I feel that our district has provided some really good professional training experiences for students with disabilities in the classroom. I know that when I started out in kindergarten they were really great at integrating students into the regular ed. classroom for certain periods of time, during those times- and I think what was great about that situation is that the teachers were so collaborative about just sitting down and discussing what that student needed in the regular ed. classroom that, you know, it was easy to find out how to better help that child in the classroom when they were integrated into the classroom. You know, that was one of my first experiences, when I first started teaching and I felt that was very positive.

I think that I feel my training and professional experiences over time have encouraged me to support the students, in any way possible, with a disability. Because I feel that, you know, you're trying to create the best, positive, learning environment for every child. So, a lot of those, a lot of those experiences, and I feel a lot of that has to do with our staff and our, you know, our special service providers and administration, like and the parents, too. I mean parents of these children are very collaborative- they're very engaging and they want to talk to you about their student and tell them, you know, tell you what, that needs to be done in the classroom for them and I feel overall that I've had a lot of positive experiences with, with helping students with disabilities in the classroom. I, you know, now in third grade I have not had as many experiences I don't feel like with

students with disabilities, but I have had some in the past which I feel that have led to positive, you know, positive encounters and collaboration among staff members to create that best learning environment for that student, and however long they were in my classroom for whether that was an hour, a half hour, you know, half of a day...yeah, there's definitely been some really good experiences for supporting those students in the classroom and, you know, we've had, like I said, different professional development training...the CPI, there's been, you know, other, other, I think meeting with the RtI team on ways to help, you know, support those students in the classroom has been very positive.

R: Good. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students?

I2: I think just through my education and development, you know, through college and through my last twelve years of teaching I truly believe that all students should have accommodations and modifications, whether that's...no student learns the same and so every child should be able, and that's part of creating that environment where you get to know your students and whether that's like student interest surveys, parent surveys...and, how do they learn best and yes, I may have to stand up in front of the room to teach them a lesson but, in the end of it all, like you want them to be able to come to you and say "I'm not understanding this" and, you have to be able to recognize that in the student, too and come up with other strategies and ways that you can sit and work with them...small group, collaborative learning, peer learning- however it works so that they can become successful in those strategies and I think that's why there's so many

different strategies out there to help the kids develop those skills because they're not all gonna get it, you know, some are visual, some are tactile, some are, you know, hands-on, and it's just very...every student in your classroom is different and yes, as hard as it is to accommodate all 28, you just, you do your best, and to use a variety of strategies to help them succeed and, you know, switch it up to make them be excited about learning, engaged, you want them to have fun at the same time and not to be threatened. You want them to be able to feel comfortable and ask those questions. A lot of kids don't self-advocate – they don't, they do not come up to you and say...so you have to recognize that in a student. Like, you want to teach them that confidence so they can self-advocate; they need to be able to, to tell, to tell what they need in their learning and their growing.

R: In terms of environmental accommodations and modifications that you make in the classroom, do you have any thoughts on what you have felt are the most successful classroom-based or environmental adjustments...is there anything in particular that you feel has been the most beneficial for all of your students?

I2: You know, I'd say, I'd say that it varies from year to year but I do, I do feel that, I switch it up often. So, I think, I mean, not getting down and frustrated in a sense where like you've established something and you think that's the method you need to use all year long - it doesn't work like that. You need to be able to change that. So, providing the visual schedule on the board every day is something I do all year long. One thing I do do, is I switch their seats often – I always am constantly moving table settings, group settings...you know, I have students who need to stand while they work, so they move their desk to the back and they can stand all day long if they need to. I have students that use those fun, sitting things to help them...the wiggle seats, yeah, because they like to

wiggle. You know, I've given kids fidget toys before to help them to sit, to be able to focus. I think just knowing that it can't stay constant, like it has to change...it can't. And, that you have to recognize that what might work for three weeks might not work for the next three weeks. So, I think just being able to, you know, be flexible as far as your grouping and letting kids stand if they need to work, if they want...I have kids that like to come and sit on the carpet to work- with their book and a clipboard...so I think it all just depends on what every student needs, and as long as they can keep in their head the clear expectations of the classroom and, you know, that the sense of rules in the classroom that, if that's how they need to learn in the classroom, then that's okay.

R: Absolutely...wonderful. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students?

I2: I think this goes back to, again, even the classroom accommodations and modifications- every student learns differently, and every student has different needs, and takes those steps at different times...the lightbulb goes on in their head at different times in their learning development. So I, I truly believe that if a student needs more time on a skill, or decreased homework, or, you know, maybe a modification on the simplicity of directions, or things like that, that that should be okay, because they're, they're learning at their own rate, they're developing at their own time- that lightbulb goes on when they're ready developmentally and so, I feel that implementing those accommodations and modifications for all students is necessary- and, it's, it's necessary. Is it perfect all the time? No, it's not...but, you try your best to really make sure that you can reach all those kids however that is. Whether that, like I said, whether that is explicit instructions, more,

simpler instructions, half of a homework page rather than a full homework page, or, you know, or no homework because sometimes homework is something that really causes a lot of stress for kids at school and then I just say “No, don’t do it”, because your time at school is when you’re learning and a lot of the time parents have frustrations with kids at home and that causes so much stress and anxiety in the home environment...I, I would rather have that done here at school...where you can sit and do it in a group setting, and work with them individually on the skill until they have it. So, I think it’s necessary...absolutely necessary and, you know, like I said, it’s not perfect all the time, and you do the best you can to know each of your students and know what they need to be able to accommodate those learning skills and strategies.

R: Very insightful- just excellent, thank you. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success?

I2: Now, this is a tricky one because, everything is so data driven right now and, I feel that assessments are important to know what your students can and cannot do and achieve, but there are so many different types of assessments that can be used through, you know, observation/anecdotal notes...yes, the pre and post tests are great, but the problem is, is that there are some kids that just don’t test well...and, I know that from my own experience growing up. I mean, I feel that, you know, I was a successful student through my years, but when it came to college prep tests and, you know, those kind of tests I scored very poorly, and I don’t, I don’t feel that it is because of my lack of knowledge (it may be for some), but, you know, I don’t feel that it was, that was why I

struggled...I feel that formats of tests are difficult, directions for some of the kids on those tests are difficult.

I think it's important to know what skills your children can do, and where that next step is going for them- like what is their next step in development. Yes, it may take them a longer time to get to that step, but using all these, you know, state-driven tests and things like that is...it's really hard, because I feel like a lot of our creative teaching is going out the window because of...we need to make sure that these kids are ready for these state tests that get them to college, and get them career-ready and, which is fine...you want your kids to be citizens of, you know, productive citizens and you want them to be able to go out into the world and get a job, but I feel that providing the real life experiences, and those engaging experiences, will help them get there. It's not always just the test that tells what they're capable of doing. So, I, I don't know, it's kind of a tricky one.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education)?

I2: So, I, I do feel that there, there should be policies and mandates in place for students, and educators. I think that, I feel that my job as a teacher is to obviously follow those mandates and policies and procedures. However, I think that not all of them are student-friendly and take the child into consideration the most. So, I feel that I do the best that I can with the mandates and policies and what is required of me by my administration, and I, I know that I need to do that in order to obviously be a part of the educational process, but I think that you can provide the best ways to use those policies

and mandates in your classroom and however it needs to be done, but you can find the best ways to do that with strategies and teaching without, let's say, not following them.

R: Very interesting...that's a very interesting point. Excellent insights- thank you so much for sharing. Based on your survey responses, there were just a couple of things that I was hoping I could get clarification on. The first one was related to the statement that: The general education classroom is the preferred setting for all students, and you replied, you agree. I was just hoping you could provide some additional thoughts on that.

I2: Sure, okay, so I think that the best way to serve a student obviously is to provide the least restrictive environment for that student, with support from, you know, our special services team, I believe that those students can be integrated into the classroom fully. And, I believe that students are going to be engaged and working with all different types of people in their life, so they need to be able to engage and work with people who may have special needs, or who may have differences in their learning techniques, or any kind of difference. The students need to be able to work together and learn each other's strengths and weaknesses and be able to develop those relationships with anybody. And, I know that at, in some points, it can be difficult for students with severe disabilities, but that may not be the best placement for them, at that time. But, all students should have that opportunity, I feel, to be part of the regular ed. classroom and to, and to develop whether that's with supports, or not supports, but they, you know, I just feel that all the students are gonna come across a variety of personalities and, you know, people with different disabilities and different strengths and weaknesses in their life. And, they need to be able to work together to problem solve and, you know, it's amazing to see what kids do together- when they work together in collaborative settings.

R: I agree. Another question was specific to facilitating student interdependence, and it states: Facilitating student interdependence and creating meaningful social education connections among students, staff, and the community at large is valued by those making policy decisions- the legislators. And, you had indicated that you agree. **Do you agree that legislators feel that facilitating student interdependence and creating meaningful social education connections, that that is something that they value? Can you explain a little bit more about that?**

I2: Sure, I think, like I said, I think, and what we had discussed before too, I think initially that they're, they're...at the heart of it is they want the kids to be collaborative members of society; however, it does translate into this data-driven, "they need to score this, to be able to do this". I, I feel that, if I look at most of- does it say administration in there, I'm sorry?

R: No, it was just legislators. So, is it important to legislators?

I2: Hmmm, now I may have to change my mind!

R: And, that's okay. **When legislators are creating policies, do you feel that their aim and motivation is truly in the interests of children and creating and facilitating interdependence among students and the community at large, and developing those meaningful relationships and connections they need in order to be successful?**

I2: I know I'm gonna say, I think "No".

R: And, that's okay. **Would you like to clarify?**

I2: Yes! Because, now I feel that the legislators are looking for that data- for that piece where it is about the schools and the institutions, rather than, rather than creating those socially acceptable, you know, connections and making those meaningful

developments with teachers. You want those students to be able to have cooperative learning skills, and working together, and not to be, you know, worried about taking a test, or what is this doing for their financial development, and, you know, those kind of things. So, I think that, yeah, students, students should be at the forefront of all of these policies, but it's clear that sometimes they're not.

R: Given your thoughts and perceptions on legislators, with their interests, and correct me if I'm wrong, I'm getting from you is that legislators are creating legislation in order to protect the institution...and for the best interests of the institution, as opposed to looking at truly what the best interests are of the children that we're trying to protect.

I2: Correct.

R: That said, another question...in the survey was that, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or IDEA- that's our special education legislation...that it has been successful towards ensuring equitable curricular access for children managing the effects of a disabling impairment within the school setting. At the time that you completed the survey, you indicated that you agree- that the special education legislation has afforded all students equitable curricular access. **Does that change, based on your thoughts now, about legislation serving the institution as opposed to the student, or does that remain the same?**

I2: No, I feel that they probably don't have access to all curricular needs that they need to have. Yeah, as I think about this now, I feel that they may try to, but it's not, it has not been successful that way...it's inadequate, and not providing the things that they need, and putting them into the regular ed. classroom, and getting them those things that they, you know, they need to be successful.

R: First and foremost, in wrapping things up, I want to thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need for clarification.

I2: Absolutely.

R: Do you have any questions for me before we wrap it up?

I2: I'm good, unless you have any other questions.

R: Thank you so much.

I2: Sure!

Appendix G: Interview #3**Key:****R: Researcher****I3: Interviewee**

R: Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

R: Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

R: When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

I3: I mean, I'll start out with a general response that, um, specifically in this job, as _____, I feel like I do it every day- and, um, whether it's, you know, calming down some tension between a staff member and a student who's always a little on edge (maybe causing problems in the classroom); uh, whether it's just comforting a student, um, that is having a hard time at home, a hard time in class. Uh, anything that I feel like I can do to

help them feel better about themselves and just to, to enjoy the school environment- and to kind of chill out while they're here , uh, makes me feel like I'm doing something every day.

Uh, you know, I can reach out to specifics, um, there was a young student, uh- I guess it was four years ago, um, a young man, uh, moved away from his mother...moved in with his father here in _____. And, it was a bit of a hard case...none of the students...teachers liked him, um, and during the course of his time here, students really started to dislike him because of his bravado and how cocksure he was of himself. And, so, he and I had a lot of conversations about, you know, 'how you need to tone down your attitude' and, you know, 'how is it that you're gonna get adults to like you'. So, I, I did a lot of mentoring and counseling with this young man- you know, it was one of those things that I think I made a big difference...he was able to get the teachers to see a different side of him. Um, students warmed up to him a little bit more- there was still a lot who thought he was a little bit too edgy, too big for his pants for _____. And, um, so, I, I think did an okay job with him, but there's someone like that every year that I feel like I, I've mentored in some way.

R: Very nice...very nice. How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?

I3: One of the things that I feel is really important is inter, interdisciplinary uh, units of study. Um, I, I don't think there's enough mingling and mixing with the core subject areas, and even our exploratories, that would allow children to see a bigger picture of how everything kind of fits together. Um, we're working towards a one-to-one environment, which I think is really important. Uh, to an extent the staff member's still

needed in the classroom to be kind of a facilitator and students, really at this age-level- middle school and on into high school, need to start collaborating with each other and learning what it's like to work as a group, 'cause for the most part, when they get outside into the real world, that is what they're gonna be doing...they're going to be working with other people and they need to understand how to do that. Um, I think virtual classrooms are important, which is why the, the one-to-one is so neat- is that students can now interact with others across the country, or for that matter in other parts of the world- and there, there are too many people in our little community that the furthest they've been is maybe downtown Chicago; they, they don't know what it's like to go down to Florida, go to the Caribbean, go to the coast of California...so, technology allows that very much. Um, again, it's really based on student collaboration and, and teachers really help facilitate that, if they, if they do it well. So, I think that's what I would like to see.

R: Very nice. How do you envision the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

I3: Old school...Charlie Brown- "Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah"- teachers lecturing all class period long...the middle school child is stuck in their seat for 45 to 50 minutes- they're not moving, they're not interacting...there's no relationship-building between the staff member and, and the student and, you know, it's just the "I'm gonna tell you what you need to do- here's the packet, and complete it". Um, so, that's just I think bad and, um, there's still a lot of people out there that do it. That's what they learned 25, 30 years ago, and it's very tough to get them to change. And, it's really hard for them to want to collaborate with the younger teachers that are coming into the field and have all these wonderful ideas in how to run a classroom...they just think 'this is the way it needs to be

done’ and ‘I have to prepare them for high school and college’. So, um, the relationship piece is always huge, and I, I preach that every school year- that if you don’t develop relationships with your students, you’re not going to be able to get them to do anything. So, that’s a bad classroom.

R: I agree. Given that, how would you propose stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, legislators), bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?

I3: I know people will argue the fact that putting money into something that’s broken won’t fix it, but at the same times, at the same time a school district has to have the adequate funding to be able to make that change. And, so one of my biggest concerns is how education is funded in this country- something has to be done, something has to be different, there has to be some equity...and not just statewide, it needs to be throughout the entire United States. Um, we, we have to do something different that is better for the schools and better for the students, and allows us to get those things that we need. Whether it be more people, more tech. now, more equipment- just, if you don’t have it, sure, a, a, a really spectacular person can get in there and work with what little they have, but if you give them the resources, you know, it would be amazing.

I also think that the direction that the country is going with teacher evaluation, um, is good and bad. It, it is identifying some things that need to be worked on. At the same time, I think it’s very difficult for a school district to eliminate a bad teacher. Once they receive tenure, they almost have to really do something extremely harmful to a child to be able to get rid of them. Whereas, if they were in a corporate model, and they did something inappropriate and they were written up for it, and it happened again, they’re

gonna be told to leave and be able to go out and get someone else to maybe come in and, and do a much better job. So, teacher evaluation, um, and unions, I just, I don't know if it's ever gonna change. Um, one of the things that I feel would really help, not only, um, from the perspective of...a teacher gets called to the carpet by a parent for doing something wrong...having a cam-, a camera in the classroom would be awesome, and it would allow the parent to see exactly how their child is behaving, uh, a little bit of the instruction that's taking place...at the same time, from an administrative point of view, it would allow me a window into, into a classroom, 24-7, to see exactly what's taking place...if what's supposed to be happening, is happening.

R: Very nice; I appreciate that a lot. How would you define or describe an equitable education?

I3: I'm gonna read directly what I wrote...um, it says: all students are given balanced opportunities to gain knowledge, to their best ability, with equal access to all forms of instruction. So, I know it's kind of a wordy sentence, but I just believe that it's very important...it's very important, no matter what the child's ability and learning is, that they're offered the same plate, or palette, of things that the smartest child in the building gets to the most disabled child in the building gets. And, what they learn from that is not gonna be the same as what the really smart person does, but yet, they're given that opportunity and they're able to receive from it what they can. And, so I, I think that's really important.

R: I agree. I like that thought very much...thank you for sharing that. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting?

I3: I think for me, um, it's helped me understand that, no matter what a child's disability, that people have to...not necessarily go out of their way, but they have to do what's necessary to allow a child to learn in whatever way they can. Um, the thought that, you know, 'I don't need to work as hard with this child, because they're not going to get whatever I tell them' it's not right. You know, you can give a student that is low-level many opportunities, like you can for someone that's very intelligent, and it allows them to: feel important; feel special; and, you know, 'this person cares for me, and I'm gonna do the best I can'.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students?

I3: I know that, um, the typical teacher still finds it difficult today to do the appropriate things that they need to. They feel like they themselves don't have the adequate training...that they're not receiving the proper resources- from, um, their case worker on their team, or the special educator, and I, I want to say it really comes down to time. That if we had more time, that the special education team members could collaborate with the standard teachers, you know, the classroom teachers, they'd be able to help them develop some of the skills they would need to transition a little bit more easily. And, so, when you're putting a 'you start at _____, and you can walk out the door at _____, you're really restricting someone to be able to take the time...and, it's not like "I'm gonna mandate you to do this", but if we were...had the ability to pay educators an appropriate salary, that would make them want to stick around and work with these people, then I think that the, the field would just be a much better place.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding implementing curricular, sorry regarding...yes, implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students?

I3: Um, once again, I, I just feel that things are placed before a classroom teacher that they don't clearly understand, and they don't want to take the time to grasp 'what's the best way to do this'. Um, there are very short periods of time that they're able to interact with their special educator to, to ask them questions, to, to try and get suggestions and ideas on, on 'what's the best way to take this material and, and deliver it' uh, not only to a child with a disability, but to every kid in the classroom 'cause they all learn differently...and, your special educator might have just a little bit more knowledge when it comes to delivery of curriculum instruction than a standard classroom teacher does...and, they just, they don't have the amount of time that they need to be able to do that. It comes down to time and money...which is sad.

R: How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success?

I3: There's another disagreement that you're gonna have with somebody from an administrative point of view and the classroom teacher. Um, everyone still works on the old model of 'you have to get 80% and above' to consider to be highly successful. It's not about 'what are the small gains and growths that someone shows' in MAP testing, or on ISAT testing, or during some CBM work/Maze work. The small growths that a child can show throughout the year at least prove that they're learning, and it doesn't mean that they're stupid in any way if they're not growing as fast as someone else. But, as long as it's proof that what a teacher, or a social worker, or a special educator is doing with that

child is helping them develop and grow a little bit each year...and, that's what should count; it should be about growth, and not that they're scoring 90% and higher on a test.

R: I agree...thank you for that. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education)?

I3: Very frustrated, because I feel that the people that create the policies and the rules that we follow don't have experience in the classroom, they don't take the time to go into the schools to see what it is they're talking about implementing...how it's going to affect the classrooms. And, therefore, they force us to put things in place that are inefficient, that they don't work well, and they end up harming children more than helping children. So, it would be really, really important that before the legislature...legislators, the people that are making the policies- get into schools and see exactly what it is they're trying to, as they say, "fix". Um, but before you do something, come take a look and walk in the shoes and see what everybody's complaining about.

R: I agree...I agree, completely. Along that continuum of thought, one of the questions on the survey that I was interested in hearing more of your thoughts on was specific to policy decisions and the question from the survey states: Individuals making policy decisions understand the challenge of program implementation in an educational context. And, you had indicated that you strongly disagree- and, I was hoping you would share more of your thoughts on that.

I3: It goes right along with the same thing that I just said, that, um, people that have the power to force things on us don't have the knowledge base...of being in the classroom. They haven't worked with 30 children in a classroom. They haven't worked

with a, a special educator who has 15 children in a support group – which is way too big. Um, they, they want to change identifications of students and they want to make it more difficult for a child to receive help and they have this all-encompassing umbrella of, ‘Let’s do RtI, and it’s gonna fix everything’, and it really doesn’t. It, it starts to put extreme pressures on a classroom teacher, without appropriate training, and without appropriate funding, and everything else that goes along with trying to “fix” some of the problems that we have in education.

R: I agree...I agree. Another question from the survey was specific to sufficient human resources within the schools, and it states: My school district has sufficient human resources to meet the needs of its students. And, you had indicated that you disagree. Could you please just share a little bit more about that?

I3: Sure. I imagine it’s gonna be the same a lot of places and it’s not just here where I work. Um, every year they, they take a look at, uh, numbers and ‘How many students do we have?’ and ‘How many people do we have providing resources?’, and it always feels like we’re having people pulled out of the building that should be left alone. Um, I don’t feel that we have enough social workers in a middle school. Um, thank the Lord that we have a child psychologist back; I almost feel like you could use two child psychologists in a middle school. Um, just based on all of the things that are going on here, at this particular grade level, you need really good resources for social and psychological issues, and there are just a ton of them that come up. Um, there are too many things that take place outside of the school that...there aren’t enough resources even in the community to help these people get what they need...um, it’s just very sad.

The...what, what we're being asked to do with teachers- is bigger classroom sizes, and, and fewer employees to do the teaching. Um, I don't feel like there are enough classroom assistants...uh, the people that are, you know, supplementing what the special educator's trying to do...they're in a classroom with 14 students that have an IEP...well, one person can't help 14 students in a classroom. Um, it comes to, uh, professional development, you know, you're on a limited budget...and, everyone can't go out and get some good professional development every day. You know, sure, granted we will try and bring things in and we'll have our own staff members try and give that type of support and training, but it's, it's nowhere what it needs to be. And, with limited funding it's...you can't allow everybody in the building to go out and get great training every year...it kind of works on a rotation, which is unfortunate, because sometimes somebody has to work three years before they go out and get any professional development. And, professional development in education is something that needs to happen every single year and...if not two times during the year. So, the, the amount of manpower and the dollars and cents, it, it's getting smaller and smaller as every year goes by. Districts keep falling further and further behind and deficit spending and they keep cutting people and resources, and it's damaging to our jobs and damaging to the students.

R: Do you think that's intentional?

I3: I don't believe it's intentional...it's the business side of a district- which is unfortunate and, they're...if you were to talk to your stakeholders, I don't know if that would change because your standard population in school is the biggest, where your special education population is, is the smallest. And so, those parents and guardians in the community that have a child that needs some special needs, of course, would want to do

anything that's, that's needed. Um, with a, a community member that doesn't have children anymore in the district...is retired, living on a fixed income...they're set in their ways and they think that we spend too much money of their taxes...we're taking too much of their money in taxes for education, as it is. And so, it comes down to finding a different way to fund the field of education...and, it's gonna take a lot of work.

R: Do you have any ideas, as to what you would propose, as an alternative to funding education?

I3: Um, I know that, when you take a look at certain areas within the state of Illinois- there are, um, cities and counties...there are school districts that are just overflowing with money, um, compared to smaller districts like _____, or, you know, areas that are just outside the cities, that they don't have the industry and they're not getting the tax revenue that's generated. I, personally, feel that it just needs to be one great, big, huge, melting pot that is somehow evenly divided up among schools that can take a child that is here in _____ and giving them the same amount of money and resources as you would have a child in _____ (whose per pupil average is maybe somewhere close to \$25,000.00, whereas here in _____ our per pupil average, I think, is somewhere around \$7,000.00).

R: So you're thinking more of an equitable distribution?

I3: Yes.

R: Very nice- thank you. Another survey question had stated that: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, or IDEA, has been successful towards ensuring equitable curricular access for children managing the effects of disabling impairment

within the school setting. You responded that you disagree- **would you please share more about that?**

I3: Sure. Um, I personally feel that a child with a disability, a lot of times, is kind of pushed aside, and not given what they should be given. They receive a lot of great attention from their special educator, who works extremely hard, um, to, to give them everything that they need, but classroom teachers often feel that it's not their job to go out of their way to make the modifications and lighten the load- and to help them the best that they can...it's almost like they're a second rate citizen, that 'I can't believe I have all these students in my class with an IEP', and 'What is it that I am supposed to do, I'm not a special educator'.

So, though it's law, and it's supposed to be, I truly don't believe that it's being implemented the way that it was supposed to. And, if there was, a, a better way to have evaluation – whether it would be cameras in the classroom, or more people that could be out there doing evaluations, you know, it would show you that the standard classroom teacher doesn't fully implement an IEP like they're supposed to. And, that something different has to happen to, to make that work...whether it be co-taught classrooms, a bigger special education staff...you know, there's things that can be done...it's gonna cost money.

R: Indeed. First and foremost, I want to thank you for your time and for your consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need for clarification.

Appendix H: Interview #4**Key:****R: Researcher****I4: Interviewee**

R: Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

R: Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

R: When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

I4: Okay... so, one of my students, uh, was a middle school student, at the time, and it was very important to this student to be able to legibly write their name in cursive. This student likely will not live independently, um, throughout their life. So, this was a seemingly small, uh, goal for them in order to function, um, what's the word I'm looking for, function independently in some capacity, and give themselves some, some

independence going forward and open up some doors for them...being able to sign checks and write bills, and things like that. Um, so when we finally got to the point where they didn't need a model to sign their first and last name anymore, um, they were able to sign within a confined space. So, like I mention they could sign, you know, on the 'X' on a check – um, that was, that was a really cool moment. And, uh, I don't know that they necessarily understood the long-term impact, but they were really excited...you can tell in their eyes and their smile how excited they were that they were able to sign their name in, in cursive.

R: How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?

I4: So, for me, an ideal learning environment, um the term 'Universal Design' comes to mind, which, to me, means that everyone has equal access to their environment or, in terms of education, all students have access to their ideal learning environment. So, what that ideal learning environment would look like would be: all students, again not just students with disability, but students with all abilities are provided the same opportunities, uh like I said regardless of ability or disability. Um, I think students are offered a variety of methods to learn- would be ideal...not everybody is an auditory learner, a visual learner, a tactile. Um, and then, I think it's important that students and staff feel safe and respected by their peers; that they have, um, kind of a comfort zone- maybe home is not a safe space for them, and I think it's important for school to be a safe and comforting environment for them.

R: Excellent; I would agree. Thank you for sharing. How do you envision the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

I4: Um, sort of the opposite of what I previously described. So, I think the worst learning environment would not provide adequate resources to students, it would not offer exposure to various methods of learning...like I said before tactile, auditory, visual, etc. um, I don't think it would allow students to feel safe and respected. Um, worst imaginable learning environment, um, oh, somewhere where they feel excluded either physically, emotionally, academically, um, and I think a big one, a student with a disability not being able to participate in all aspects of their day as their typically developing peers...I think would not be an ideal learning environment.

R: I would agree...thank you. **How would you propose stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, legislators, etc.), bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?**

I4: This one I think is tricky. I think if we had the answer to this we would have solved the world's problems. Um, well finances I don't think are the only factor. Unfortunately, I believe that more affluent schools and districts might have more resources and opportunities to bridge this gap. Um, I think technology is a great way for staff to meet the students where they are. I think that teachers and administrators taking an individualized approach- looking at each student as they are will help bridge this gap. And, um, I think offering a variety of methods to learn the material, and offering students respect on a daily basis can improve their self-esteem and help them develop and grow. And, I think those last points are, um, especially important because you don't need money to make those things happen....I think you just need caring, compassionate teachers and staff to, to help bridge the gap in some ways.

R: I agree; thank you. **How would you define or describe an equitable education?**

I4: I would describe an equitable education as an equal education for all students regardless of race, gender, disability, financial status, etc. Um, I think that this involves meeting students where they are in terms of their current abilities, and providing the appropriate support in order to help them succeed. Um, yeah, and again, you know, Universal Design comes to mind and I guess kind of what I mentioned earlier, in terms of, just making equitable education...making education available to everybody regardless of, um, those identifying factors about them.

R: Would you say that it's all students performing in the exact same way, each and every day?

I4: I would not. I think that students are going to reach their own individual potentials, and I think teachers should be accepting to the fact that students, are going to have different levels of, um, different levels of what those potentials are and, um, shouldn't all be expected to do exactly the same thing- even within the same class and within the same curriculum.

R: I agree. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting?

I4: So, I think my education and training strongly influence my thoughts and practices towards students with an identified disability. I think I was initially drawn to this career because of an internal desire to help others... for me, a specific desire to work with kids. Um, I think my training gave me additional resources in order to support these students.

R: Very nice. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students?

I4: I think my education, in particular, um, was very heavily focused on helping to create these, um, accommodations and modifications. So, again, I think it very strongly influenced my ability in that, in those areas. I think that my education also focused strongly on the importance of taking an interdisciplinary approach, which I think is particularly beneficial in creating an optimal classroom setting.

R: Very nice. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students?

I4: So, your emphasis there was helpful because my initial thoughts were that I don't know that I've had a strong influence on curricular accommodations or modifications, but again I think that my education has strongly influenced my mind-set in how I implement those curricular changes. Um, I feel that, um, I'm well-trained in collaborating with a team and I think it's important to have the whole team helping to implement these accommodations and modifications for all students. Um, and as a team, you know, we help all students, not just those who have been identified as benefitting from additional support or those with a disability, um, to participate in a classroom setting.

R: Very nice. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success?

I4: So, I think we all wear different lenses based on our experiences in education. Teachers will measure success differently than parents, administrators, therapists, etc. And, for me, I think it's important to talk to the student, teacher, parent, all of those people to determine how others perceive the success, or achievement, just so that I have a better understanding of how, you know, in a one-on-one setting or in a small group setting, I think students can show different levels of success than in a classroom or real-world experience. Um, but in terms of myself and keeping data on actual success, um, achievements in terms of goals and reaching goals, um, I do like to keep numeric data and other samples, um, just in order to have more concrete evidence of success and, you know, what they are capable of regardless of what the setting may be.

R: I agree. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education)?

I4: I apologize...I might need some prompting on this one. Um, I think my experiences and training have made me more aware of what the policies and mandates are regarding both general and special education. Um, but I, you know, I know that I would abide by them regardless. I think that our training, um, teaches us to abide by policies and mandates. And, I think a lot of my training involved advocating for myself and others, and that can also relate to policies and, uh, you know, going to Washington, or our representatives, and fighting for, uh, what we believe in and I think special education, um, as well as general education is, is no different. I think that we can make our voices heard and make sure that these students are being well represented, and their needs are being met.

R: In your mind, do you believe that having some sort of policy in order to protect the rights of students identified with a disability, or a disabling impairment, do you believe that that is necessary in order to continue to serve them effectively within the school setting?

I4: Um, I do. I think there does need to be some sort of policy in order to hold people accountable. I think it's unfortunate that people need to be held accountable, but I do think it is where we are in society. And so, yes I do think that policies and procedures do need to be in place in order to protect students who, and people, people in general- but, um, in the academic setting who, who do need the extra support and have documented disabilities, and things like that.

R: The way that the policy is, as of today, while something is potentially necessary in order to protect the rights of individuals who are identified with a disabling impairment, Do you feel that the current policy is relevant towards ensuring that those students who are identified are able to access an equitable education- not just the environment, but the curriculum as well?

I4: I think it varies. I think it's, I think it would probably vary a lot from setting to setting, from school to school. Um, say it one more time?

R: The question?

I4: Mhm...

R: While you acknowledge that a policy is necessary, the current policy that we have, isn't necessarily a relevant policy towards ensuring that our kids who are identified with disabling impairments are served an educational opportunity that is equitable and meets them where their learning profile is. So, we acknowledge that something needs to be

there, but **is the document that we currently have, is that a relevant document that gets us to the end goal of ensuring that all students have access to an equitable education?** Meaning not just the environment, but the curriculum, as well.

I4: I guess I don't know that I'm familiar enough with exactly what the policy is, but I think there are probably some gaps in, in what we have.

R: Indeed. Thank you for your time and for your consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need for clarification.

Appendix I: Interview #5**Key:****R: Researcher****I5: Interviewee**

R: Disclaimer: Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. At no time will your identity be revealed through the interpretation and write-up of this study. This study is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in the field of Disability and Equity in Education.

R: Script: Your participation in this research study is very much appreciated. Based on your previous survey responses and/or comments, submitted to this researcher, I am hoping to gather additional information and/or clarification regarding a few points of interest. Please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions as honestly as possible—there are no correct or incorrect responses. I am not here to judge you or discredit your point of view, I am simply trying to gain a better understanding of varying perspectives regarding the field of education.

R: When was a time in your career that you know you made a significant difference to at least one of your students? How did you know you made a difference?

I5: Well, it probably started when I was with the Hands-on-Science program many, many years ago at, uh, _____ school district, and, um, I was asked by, uh, the person that runs the program, the, you know, that, I wasn't really sure about education, but she thought I had this knack to do it. And, um, when I did the first class I had this student that really, just, I mean, you could tell he wasn't interested, but when we

started doing the science, his eyes just lit up. And, he just, that's all he talked about, is that. His parents told me that, that that's all he talks about- he had a good time doing the Hands-on-Science. And, that was, I think the start for me. So...

R: Very nice, and how did you know? What was the feedback that you had received from the student that made you know that you finally hit a nerve for him?

I5: His mannerisms. Uh, the first, the first time that he took it, he, you know, it was an after school thing and he didn't really like school that much. But then, he had this want to come to, you know, that was what he looked forward to and, you know, his parents gave me that feedback and I think that's where it started there.

R: Wonderful- thank you for sharing. How do you envision an ideal learning environment for students?

I5: That's always a tough one. Um, my, uh, my thought would be that whatever, whatever classroom environment that the student feels comfortable with- whether or not, you know, they let you know, you know, that, that this what I enjoy or what I don't enjoy. But sometimes that's hard to accommodate in that situation. But, I don't know, it's just, I guess you just have to ask, and feel out. That's really all I can provide for that. So...

R: Absolutely. In your process of collaborating with other educators, in terms of creating that ideal environment for your students, what are typically some of the things that come up as being areas of need?

I5: You mean with the teacher, or the student?

R: For the students, what were the areas the areas of need that need accommodating or modifying that you would see an ideal learning environment already taking care of?

I5: Well with the students that I work with, I don't typically get that kind of feedback, because their, whatever, whatever disabilities they have, or, um, in, in that environment, they, they don't really, it's not something they would volunteer. Um, they might say it's, you know, the environment is too cold, or too hot, or whatever, uh, the case may be, but they just kind of seem to kind of accept whatever, whatever environment they're in...but, you're also asking me over a lot of years of experience, too.

R: Absolutely, and given those years of experience, if an environment is more ideal, what makes it that way?

I5: Uh, they'll let you know, I mean, but, but as far as the- what am I trying to look for here, um, them volunteering to say that, for example that while 'This, this room could be painted, uh, pink, that would make me learn better', uh, that, that has never happened. Um, but, it's just whatever affects them immediately is what, what, what feedback you usually get. Whether it's, like I said, it's environmental, or if they're having a hard day, or whatever. But, they, usually they won't, they won't volunteer information to make their life a better, a better situation. I, I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

R: Okay...and, so do you feel like it's the adults' responsibility then to anticipate creating an environment that's more amenable to their skills?

I5: I think we should...absolutely. Um, but to balance it between so many kids with, with so many needs, um, and since I'm not- I don't run that environment that's, I

can provide feedback for that environment, but ultimately it's up to the, to the teacher I'm working with to...yeah, to decide whether that's true or not.

R: Okay; very nice. How do you envision the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

I5: Well, I mean, that, that degree of, uh, difficulty could be...if the, if the child is having an ultra-bad day because of, because of a family situation, that environment, no matter how well you make it is not going to help them. Um, but, uh, can you ask me that one more time? I'm sorry...

R: Sure. How do you envision the worst imaginable learning environment for students?

I5: That one's tough. Um, we always want to be positive, um, you know, and try to make that, make that day positive for them, but, uh, but like I said, whatever, whatever the, I wanna say the emotional baggage or whatever that they bring is going to be their, their difficulty to begin with. The only thing we can do, or at least I can do, is to try to work around those barriers and, and try to, you know, lighten that child's day up. And, to, to make it instead of turning it, you know, having it a negative try to be a positive, but it doesn't always work. You have to, to, you know, do further interventions, or something, but, yeah...I would never want it to be a negative situation to begin with. So...

R: Absolutely...absolutely. How would you propose that stakeholders (students, staff, parents, administrators, legislators, etc.), bridge the gap between an ideal learning environment and the worst imaginable learning environment?

I5: I don't...that one I'm, I'm not really, I'd, I'd like to, I'd like to say that I would, I know, but that's...since I don't deal with, with that environment, I don't, I don't really know how to answer that question. The only thing that I would, would input, as far as a personal, personal feeling, is that we should all collaborate together. You know, we always have to work within the means of budgets and everything else, but I think that, um, even the, even the, not gonna say the lowest, but the, the ones that have the, the least amount of input, everybody should have an equal amount of input. So...

R: I agree...I agree; excellent. **How would you define or describe an equitable education?**

I5: Uh, an equitable education, to me, would be a, a student that felt like they got something out of their experience; that they felt like they, they could take away something whether or not they matured enough to learn, or um, because I mean I do deal with, I do deal with regular ed. students, too. But, that, feel that they, they have actually, can walk away with a new, a new experience. To where they, they look forward to their next experience. It's not realistic for all students, but, but that would be what I would like to see. That they, they say "Oh, okay, I'm ready for the next new challenge".

R: Very nice...very nice. **How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding supporting students with an identified disability within the school setting?**

I5: That one's pretty complicated because of, because we, for what I do, we don't get a high amount of training. We do get a sufficient amount, but we, most of our experience comes from OJT and, on the job training, um, and, uh, and we do get some supplemental training, but it's usually within the bounds of what, what the school is

actually doing. But, for our job, ours is “hit the ground running” and we learn, we learn that way...ask a lot of questions, um, and, uh, of course, you know, with, with the knowledge that we have, and, and within the IEPs that we work with we get our, and, and, and basically, it’s mostly you learn as you go, and, uh, but, uh; another school district that I worked with in the past provided a little bit more, uh, more training as far as after school goes, but for the most part it’s what, what you bring with you and you, you go from there. So, and, over the years I’ve learned how to, you know, if, you know, a lot of imaginable scenarios, but certainly I don’t know them all. So, you just learn; you deal with what- you cope with what you deal with. So...

R: Mhm. How would you say your interactions with parents are, and the family support systems? Because, you’re here doing a lot of intensive work with students...do you have those opportunities to collaborate with families, and have that communication with families when it’s positive, when there are good things happening, and when you’re both working together to try and meet their child’s needs?

I5: Um, that, that is a rare situation. Um, my particular district does not involve the inclusion assistant or paraprofessional, in a, in, on a rare occasion it does happen, but we’re not usually involved with the, with their IEP meetings and things like that. So, we have few opportunities to interact with, with the parents themselves, but there are times where we have to talk on the phone and, and, and we always try to make, make it a positive, uh, situation, but generally the, the calls have to do with situations where we have to overcome, uh, uh, uh, you know, an obstacle. But, um, the only real communication that we have if we, not running, running into parents out on the street is,

uh, to, uh, communicate via their assignment notebooks, um, but we, uh, we get very, very few interactions with the parents themselves.

And, I, uh, personally think that we should because that's, and, and that happened in my last school district- where we were actually involved, and I, that is something that I've been clamoring for, for this district for years and years. That we be involved, because a lot of times that the, um, the, the "apple-" sometimes "-does not fall too far from the tree" and it helps us to learn the student so much more if we know what their parents are, um, you know, are like- and, not, not, not to analyze, or, certainly, but to understand. And, that's always been, I've been speaking about that for a very, for a lot of years and, and it's in, although we get acknowledged for it, it's just never happened. I've only, in this, in the entire time I've been in this district, I've only been to one actual IEP meeting. And, I, that's something I think that the inclusion assistant is, uh, is in desperation for because it gets, you know, we can understand, and we can, you know, we can help the student so much better if we have that interaction with the family or the parents... whoever their guardians may be. That's my personal...so...

R: Absolutely...I would agree- absolutely; thank you. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding creating classroom accommodations/modifications for all students?

I5: That one's actually fairly easy, um, that's, I think that has to do with experience. Um, you know, when, when you're first starting out it can be very overwhelming. You know, even, even though I have children myself, you know, as myself, and I've, and I've, I've had to learn them over the years and as they get older you, you learn naturally...it's the same way with the, with, with the students here.

They're kinda sorta like your children and, uh, but you get a different batch every year. And, uh, you, you learn to, to cope with, uh, and, and to, to deal with and, and learn what their disabilities are and, um, you learn all the different situations and scenarios and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. You have to try it, and, you know, if it fails you try something else...you know, until you get through it- you never stop.

R: Absolutely...absolutely...you never stop. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding implementing curricular accommodations/modifications for all students?

I5: Um, I think again that goes back to experience; the more you do, the better you get. Um, the, and certainly you, you learn, you know, learn within the boundaries of what you have, too- uh, and you, you know, you just figure out your students and figure out what, what they actually need and you also bring your personal experience to it. What, what motivates you to learn? What, what helps? What makes them laugh? What makes them, you know, think more about...or, you get down to their personal level, you know, find out what interests them...and, that's what usually works for me. Once I find out what, what their, what motivates them, or what interests them...whether it's a video game or, um, sports or whatever- I'm in. And, that's how it, and, and that's, that's what I use...I explore that and exploit that.

R: Thank you for sharing. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding quantifying and/or qualifying student achievement/success?

I5: Oh, quantification...um, I don't do much in the way of, uh, in, you know, uh, paperwork as far as, as far as students go, except I do challenge myself to, to make things

that I do better. Um, like I've taken a program that, that was here that, that the district has purchased and I've kind of tweaked my own little, um, my own little system to where the kids can look at it at glance rather than it being imaginary and they can see, see where their progress is and know that, you know, at a glance, they can do this, and that they can, 'I need to do this next', or, or, 'Oh, I forgot my place, and this is where I need to be'. Um, that's my only real quantification besides, uh, besides keeping the necessary paperwork that I, that I do, as far as, uh, as far as their, um, uh, I can't even think of it...their, as far as their classwork goes. Other than that, that's really about it.

R: Absolutely. Do you find that there are other ways of measuring your students' success? And, how do you do that?

I5: Yes!! Um, that's all gut. Um, you know, the, just by them telling you, you know, getting feedback by them- by what, what your, what their day was like...you know, 'What, what did they learn?'... 'What, what do you need to do?'. Um, asking questions all day long, you know, and, and just watching out for, you know, facial expressions, body language, and all that; sometimes that's hard, but, you know, but that's, that's what you have to do, you know. Whether they go home with a positive experience or not, you know...what did they do for the weekend, you know...obviously, inter...interaction I think is the, is the key, you know...talking and, you know, joking and what not. Find out what makes them angry; what makes them happy. So, total interaction.

R: I would agree. How have your training and professional experiences shaped your thoughts and /or practices regarding abiding by enacted policies/mandates (general education and special education)?

I5: Well, naturally there, there are rules to things, and, um, I think that, you know, we, we actually have, you know, I mean as a, as an individual, and as an employee, and as a professional I have to abide by the, the, the things, that, the policies that the school district puts out...of course, it's natural, you know, it's naturally professional to do that. Um, but, at the same time I think that, you know, within, within those realms, too, you can, you can tweak a little bit here and there to, you know, to help your students without, without going on the outside of those, of those bounds...um, I think it's, you have to, really in order to survive. So, but, uh, but naturally you follow the, follow the rules and it's, it's a matter of being a professional. So...

R: I would agree. On the survey that you completed for me, there were a couple of questions that I was hoping to receive some clarification on. The first question from the survey that I was hoping you could tell me more about was relating to students completing assigned tasks, and the question states: Students should complete assigned tasks in the same way. And, your response was that, you disagree. **Can you tell me a little bit more about that?**

I5: Every student has a different, different need. Um, first you try, you know, try to, try to do the, um, the established work. And, but, if the established work doesn't work, you have to, uh, you have to tweak it a little bit...you have to, you know, um, whatever, um, uh, I don't know, I can't really think of any examples right now. But, um, but, if, if it helps them understand, um, whether, whether it's a computer program, or, um, you know, internet-based, or, uh, a different book, um, an easier book, you just, you, you have to do the work-arounds in order to have them understand it. And they, at the end of the day, they may still not understand it, but uh, but that's ultimately not my goal...you know, I

want them to understand...but, um, naturally, you know, it, it...and, plus- you have different disabilities. So, you have to do different approaches, too, as everybody has a different need. So...yeah.

R: Yes, they do; thank you- very nice.

I5: I hope I clarified that one a little bit.

R: Yes, you did...so, thank you. The other survey question that I was hoping you could provide some additional information on, related specific to financial resources, and the question states: My school district has sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of its students. And, you indicated that you disagree- and, I was hoping you could share some more information about that.

I5: Um, maybe I could clarify. I mean, I, I do agree in the sense of, we have the materials that we need for the, for the child, of course, but can we always, can we always use more resources? Yes. Um, you know, I think that, that, uh, sometimes my needs aren't met for what I can use to, to help a student. And, of course you have to go through, you know, established procedures to get things that you need, and, and I don't know that I'm, I'm not saying that I'm impulsive, but, you know, it's 'I needed it yesterday' or, 'I could use it, could have used it yesterday', but, uh, for the most part, for the most part, yes- they are, are met, but not in all situations. And, the school has obviously, you know, by the curriculum and whatever the school board decides too, you know, that I have to work with in those realms. So, that may not be what I need, for that particular student need, at that time. So...

R: And so, how do you go about then ensuring that you can access the resources that you need in order to meet maybe another student's particular needs, as opposed to

following what the general education curriculum that was provided for by the board offers?

I5: Um, I'll try to hunt, hunt for a different resource. Um, and usually, I mean usually I can find it in the school, but, uh, but if I need to, maybe I have to rely on the internet, or something- maybe for a video, or something...the, something a little more visual. But, it's, it's, and I'm not gonna use that, I hate to use that word "impulsive", but it's what I need at this second, you know, to, in order for that child to understand. I can't go and do a lot of research and then, "I'll get back to you tomorrow, and we'll get that decided"...it's, "This is something that I need now". And, you know, I just, I'm, I'm crafty, but, you know, but, uh, that's just something that, that, uh, the experience that I bring, that uh, and, or, I- I'll go look for it...you know, I need it from somebody else in the school, I'll, I'll certainly go and look for, or ask around. So, but, it's, it's very rare, you know...but, but, my, my, maybe my disagreement was a little strong. So...

R: Well, that's it. Thank you for your time and for your consideration. I will be in contact with you should I have any additional questions and/or need of clarification.