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General Education Teachers' Experiences
Successfully Including Students with Developmental Disabilities
Who Engage in Challenging Behaviors
in General Education Settings Using Positive Practices

by

Sharon Lohrmann

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Special Education

Lehigh University

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Abstract

The overall purpose of this dissertation study was to understand teachers' attitudes and beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully include students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior using positive behavior intervention strategies in general education settings. To this end, 14 general education teachers who had the experience of including a student with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors in their classroom were identified for participation in the study. To gather data, participants were asked to engage in a series of three separate in depth interviews spaced at approximately one-week intervals and respond to a series of member checks.

Teachers developed initial impressions about including their focus student that could be characterized as either apprehensive or confident. Three predispositions appear pertinent to the type of initial impression teachers formed and included a school vision toward inclusion, their general beliefs about classroom management, and the extent that they had direct or indirect prior experiences with students similar to their focus students.

The teachers described two levels of essential supports they needed to be successful with their student. The first level was described as a school wide context of social support. This level of support can be conceptualized as a culture within the building where professional staff took care of and supported one another. As might be expected, even within a context of social support teachers experienced struggles and frustrations related to including their focus student. Among the struggles encountered included conflicts with parents and professionals, and student centered struggles regarding challenging behavior. In response to struggles and frustrations the second level

of support became evident. When experiencing a struggle or frustration, members of the school community provided a number of situation specific supports to the teachers. Situation specific supports that teachers found most helpful included interpersonal supports, collaboration with others, and awareness building activities.

Despite not having any training in positive behavior support, the teachers used combinations of intervention practices with their student that were comprehensive and grounded in core beliefs that guided their development. Among the intervention practices used included strategies that were proactive, helped build relationships, reinforced appropriate behaviors, effectively responded to unwanted behaviors, and taught skills to make their students more socially competent.

Upon reflection, teachers credited their experience as helping to change or validate their perspectives about including challenging students and helped them to grow as professionals. Despite positive experiences, teachers nonetheless held beliefs about parameters for when inclusion might not be appropriate. Implications for practices and future directions for research are discussed.

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Historically, students with disabilities were removed from the general class setting and placed in a special class or school environments that were designed to meet their unique educational needs. However, these special placements often isolated students from their typical peers creating a social vacuum that lacked opportunity for interactions or relationship development. This was particularly true for students with severe developmental disabilities whose idiosyncratic communicative styles further inhibited opportunities for social relations. A primary concern with this isolation is the extent to which students with disabilities have opportunities to experience membership and belonging with a typical peer group and the school community (Kunc, 1992).

The current school reform movement (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Sailor, Gee, Karasoft, 2000), passage of IDEA 1997, and empirical demonstrations (Hunt & Ferron-Davis, 1992; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994) validating the benefits of inclusion have made inclusive educational environments more available for students with disabilities. One explanation for this increase may be the emphasis placed on serving students in typical environments by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specifically, the IDEA mandates that “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities [should be] educated with children who are not disabled; and ...removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment [should] occur only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (s612(a)(5)(A)).

During the 1998-1999 school year 95.9% of students with disabilities were being served within the regular school building with 47.4% being served in the general class environment for some part of the day (23rd Annual Report to Congress, 2002). While growing at a slow rate, this represents a 2.1% increase in the number of students being educated in the general class environment for more than 22% of school day since 1990 (23rd Annual Report to Congress, 2002). Although a consistent increase has been observed, not all students are benefiting equally. Elementary age children are more likely than older students to be included in general education settings (22nd Annual Report to Congress, 2000). Further, students with severe disabilities (e.g., autism, mental retardation, multiple disabilities) continue to be the least likely to receive services in inclusive settings (22nd Annual Report to Congress, 2000).

For students with severe disabilities, research on inclusion has focused on two important areas: (a) benefits/outcomes of inclusive placements and (b) teacher attitudes/beliefs about inclusion. Each of these areas has contributed to our understanding of both the appropriateness and acceptability of inclusion for learners with severe disabilities and helps to identify factors that may enhance or inhibit successful inclusion outcomes.

Benefits of Inclusion

Many studies have looked at various outcomes from inclusive placements. A number of benefits for students with severe disabilities included in general education settings can be gleaned from this research. Most notable are the social opportunities available to students in inclusive placements as compared to placement in self contained settings. For example, students included in general education have increased social

contacts (e.g., Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994) and social networks (e.g., Kennedy, Shukla, & Fryxell, 1997).

A second major benefit of inclusion is that students are more likely to have better quality Individualized Educational Programs (IEP). For example, IEPs designed for inclusive settings have been significantly more likely to have ratings of best practice quality (e.g., age-appropriateness and functionality) than IEPs designed for special class settings (e.g., Hunt, Goetz, & Anderson, 1986; Hunt & Ferron-Davis, 1992; Hunt et al., 1994). In addition to superior quality, students with severe disabilities may also be more likely to achieve greater gains on their IEP objectives when in inclusive classrooms (e.g., Saint-Laurent & Lessard, 1978; Brinker & Thorpe, 1984).

A third benefit of inclusion is that availability of instructional features that are at least as good as in special class settings. For example, greater amounts of instructional time and opportunities for participation in whole group instruction may be equal or more in the general education class as compared to self contained classrooms (e.g., Helmstetter et al., 1998; Logan & Keefe, 1997; Logan & Malone, 1998). Thus far, the research on inclusion suggests that students with severe disabilities may benefit from placements in general education settings. Specifically, these benefits include increased social relations, higher quality IEPs and equitable instructional opportunities.

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Inclusion

The second area research has focused on is the extent that general education teachers hold positive attitudes toward including students with severe disabilities. This research has focused on teachers' general acceptance of inclusion and what they needed to make inclusion work. Referring to special education teachers, Kauffman (1994) noted

that one of the worst mistakes we can make is to train teachers “whose skills are no match for their student’s needs and whose level of expertise in instructing and managing difficult students is not significantly different from that of the model general educator” (p. 615). His point is that in order to serve students with difficult learning and behavioral needs, special education teachers should be trained to have special skills that allow them to be successful with these students. Although it is unclear as to whether general educators in school buildings adopting inclusive philosophies feel that their level of expertise in instructing and managing difficult learning and behavioral needs is sufficient, findings from empirical research indicate that generally they hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1995a/b; Smith, 1997).

One common finding across the studies on teacher attitudes toward inclusion is that over time as general education teachers acquired first hand opportunities to include a child in their classroom, they became more comfortable with and less apprehensive about inclusion (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski, & Costanza, 1999). Sometimes referred to as transformational experiences (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993), changes in general education teachers’ stance on inclusion is encouraging because it offers a window of opportunity where “trying it out” may lead to an adoption of values and beliefs consistent with inclusive philosophy (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993).

The extent that teachers perceive themselves as being successful may be related to the extent that they believe they are receiving administrative and educational supports for their inclusion efforts. For example, Wolery, Gessler-Werts, Snyder, and Lisowski

(1995) surveyed general and special education teachers and found that teachers who rated themselves as extremely successful including students with severe disabilities were more likely to have supports and resources they perceived necessary than were teachers who rated themselves as unsuccessful. Gessler-Werts, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell and Salisbury (1996a) and Gessler-Werts, Wolery, Snyder, and Caldwell (1996b) continued this line of research by focusing on support needs in relation to the severity of disability. These researchers found that general and special education teachers of students with severe disabilities perceived themselves as having greater support needs than teachers of students with mild disabilities.

The type of actual support and resource needs perceived as necessary to enhance inclusion varies across studies on teacher attitudes. Variations in perceived support needs may have as much to do with school building climate and culture as it does the individual needs of the student being included. Several examples of support needs can be gleaned from the research on teacher attitudes. For example, opportunities to plan for inclusion prior to the student's arrival was described by general education teachers in Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999). General education teachers in Janney et al. (1995a/b) described needing administrative and special educator support. In another example, teachers in Coots et al. (1998) described the availability of paraprofessional and related services staff as important.

In addition to the need for support, general education teachers have stressed that respect and professional autonomy are important features for successful inclusion (Giangreco et al., 1993; York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). For example, general education teachers in York et al., (1992) and Giangreco et al.

(1993) believed it was important that they could volunteer for inclusion and not be made to take a student. Other general education teachers (e.g., Coots et al., 1998; Janney et al., 1995a/b) discussed the importance of being recognized as the primary decision makers regarding instructional needs and practices for students with severe disabilities. This means that although they sought assistance from special educators or administrators, they enjoyed being responsible for the educational decision-making in their classrooms including those made for students with severe disabilities.

In summary, general education teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. First hand experiences, receiving needed supports/resources, and acknowledgment of professional autonomy are three factors that may influence attitudes toward inclusion and inclusion success.

Positive Behavior Support

While the literature reveals the positive benefits of inclusion for learners with severe disabilities and positive general educator attitudes, noticeably absent from the discussion is how students who display challenging behaviors affect positive outcomes and teacher attitudes. The few studies that have addressed problem behavior, suggest that problem behaviors can have a negative influence on peer membership and teacher attitudes. For example, general education students in Fisher et al. (1998) and Williams and Downing (1998) described inappropriate behavior and being disruptive as potentially contributing to nonmembership. Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum (2000) and Cook (2001) found that general education teachers were significantly more likely to nominate students with a variety of disabilities into the categories of concern, indifference, and rejection as opposed to the category of attachment. Analysis of written anecdotal

comments by teachers in these studies revealed that behaviors such as being “disruptive” or “disorganized” were often associated with students who were nominated in the rejection category.

Although problem behaviors may create a strain in the classroom, current practice suggests an emphasis on addressing problem behavior in inclusive settings and including general education teachers in the process. In 1997, the IDEA expanded the team membership to include general education teachers as active participating members of the IEP process. Such a requirement suggests that general education teachers are being expected to take on increasing responsibility for students with severe disabilities in general education settings. In the past, placement outside of the general education setting excluded the general education teacher from the process of designing and implementing behavior support plans. As more students are being included in the general class, general education teachers are being asked to take more responsibility for meeting the needs of all students. One such responsibility is participating in the design and implementation of behavior support plans when problem behavior is a concern.

One approach to designing behavior support plans is positive behavior support. Positive behavior support (PBS) emerged in response to a need for interventions that used positive practices to result in quality life outcomes. One such outcome is inclusion in school and community settings (Weigle, 1997). According to Koegel, Koegel, and Dunlap (1996) positive behavior support is premised on an appreciation of the individual’s desires and needs and the acknowledgement that students should be treated with dignity and respect. With these fundamental beliefs in mind, supports are designed

that offer opportunities for the student to achieve desired and meaningful outcomes within the context of inclusive settings.

PBS draws from person-centered philosophies and the principals of applied behavior analysis to result in comprehensive support plans. Although the focus is on designing support plans for behavioral challenges, PBS is considered one way to promote inclusive opportunities (Weigle, 1997). To achieve an inclusive outcome, PBS relies on a collaborative team approach that involves the family and general education teacher working together with specialized personnel (e.g., special education teacher) to design a supportive and enriching environment for the student (Anderson, Russo, Dunlap, & Albin, 1996).

The first step to designing behavior support plans using the process of PBS is to conduct a functional behavioral assessment that identifies the antecedent and consequent variables maintaining behavioral occurrence (Knoster, 2000). The information collected is then translated into a hypothesis of behavioral function that proposes an explanation for why behavior is occurring. These hypotheses are pivotal in the design of a comprehensive support plan as they provide a basis for the selection of intervention strategies (Bambara, Mithcell-Kvacky, & Iacobelli, 1994; Carr & Carlson, 1993).

Interventions in comprehensive support plans are designed to prevent occurrence of problem behaviors through the manipulation of antecedent events (e.g., Foster-Johnson, Ferro, & Dunlap, 1994; Horner, Day, & Day, 1997), instruction of alternative replacement skills (e.g., Carr, Levin, McConnachie, Carlson, Kemp, Smith, & Magito-McLaughlin, 1999; Durand & Carr, 1991), and elimination of reinforcement associated

with the maintenance of problem behavior (e.g., Carr et al., 1999; Lerman, Iwata, & Wallace, 1999).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As a result of the increasing trend toward inclusion and positive behavior support, general education teachers are finding themselves facing student problem behaviors that previously would have been addressed in a special education placement. Problem behaviors, such as disruption to classroom routines, can be one of the most difficult challenges teachers face. Because the occurrence of problem behaviors in general education settings may place the student at risk for exclusion, current state of the art knowledge and practice requires general education teachers be prepared to educate students with behavioral challenges. Although research efforts have focused on understanding the process and outcomes of inclusion and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, little attention has focused on the experiences and needs of general education teachers serving students with behavioral challenges in inclusive settings. Therefore, the central research focus of this study is to understand the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully include students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior using positive behavior intervention strategies in general education settings. Positive intervention strategies are defined as those that are consistent in values with positive behavior support in that they emphasize prevention and instructional practices.

The current study will address four specific purposes. The first purpose is to understand what contributes to the types of initial impressions teachers form about including a student with developmental disabilities who engages in challenging behaviors

in their general education classroom. Understanding the factors that contribute to the types of impressions teachers form about including their students may offer guidance about the types of practices needed to encourage the formation and transformation of positive teacher attitudes. Currently, a number of studies (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Janney et al., 1995a/b) describe the attitudes and beliefs teachers have about inclusion but have yet to reveal the specific influences on the formation of those attitudes. Findings from this study may identify practices that may help general education teachers form positive attitudes about including students with disabilities who engage in challenging.

The second purpose is to understand what general education teachers believe are essential supports needed by teachers when including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. A number of studies (e.g., Gessler-Werts et al., 1996a/b) have suggested support needs for teachers in inclusive settings; however, none of the studies focused on students with disabilities who also engaged in challenging behaviors. Thus, the extent to which support needs differ for teachers who include students with behavioral challenges is relatively unknown. The findings from this study may then extend the research on support needs by describing the specific types of supports and practices teachers need to successfully include students who engage in behavioral challenges.

The third purpose is to understand how teachers describe the intervention practices they use to address the challenging behaviors of the included students with disabilities. Thus far the research on positive behavior support has focused on establishing the effectiveness of positive intervention practices used by specialized

personnel (e.g., special education teachers or job coaches) (e.g., Carr et al., 1999) and families (e.g., Lucyshyn, Dunlap, & Albin, 2000). Absent from this literature base is a demonstration or description of how a general education teacher participate in the development of and use positive intervention practices. The findings from study may illustrate the ways in which general education teachers are involved in designing and using positive intervention strategies to produce successful outcomes for their students.

Finally, the fourth purpose of this study is to describe the teachers' reflections on how their beliefs and attitudes changed as a result of including a student with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior in their classroom. The literature on inclusion suggests that over time teachers attitudes toward inclusion transform from negative or apprehensive to positive and confident (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993). Thus far, these studies (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1996a.b) have not looked at teachers including students with behavioral challenges. The extent that similar transformations occur in situations where the included student is behaviorally challenging is not known. The current study extends the research by describing the factors that may contribute to positive transformations in general education teacher attitudes. Thus, practices to best prepare and support general education teachers in ways that encourage positive transformations in attitudes can be identified.

Research Questions

This study interviewed 14 general education teachers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania who have successfully included a student with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviors in their classroom. The overall research question guiding this inquiry is what are these teachers' beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully

include a student with challenging behavior in general education classrooms? Four specific questions will be investigated:

1. What factors influenced the teachers' initial impressions about including a student with developmental disabilities and challenging behavior in their classroom?
2. What do the teachers believe are essential supports needed by teachers when including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior?
3. How do teachers describe the intervention practices they used to address the challenging behaviors of students with developmental disabilities in their classrooms?
4. How have the teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion changed as a result of including a student with challenging behavior in their classroom?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a basis for the need and significance of the proposed study. The specific purposes are to (a) establish an empirically based rationale for inclusion, (b) provide a description of the literature addressing general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, (c) provide a description of the research investigating the support needs of general education teachers, and (d) establish the need for the proposed study. For purposes of this review the term inclusion is used to refer to full or part time participation in general education academic and nonacademic settings.

The literature review is organized in the following way. First, a rationale for inclusion is described based on empirical demonstrations of the benefits and acceptance of inclusion. Second, the literature addressing the attitudes and beliefs of general education teachers is reviewed. Third, a description of studies specifically investigating the support needs of general education teachers is provided. Fourth, an overview of positive behavior support as it relates to promoting inclusive opportunities is provided. Taken together the findings from this review will support the need and potential contribution of the proposed study. The following criteria was used to select and include studies in the review. Included studies are those that:

1. were published in peer reviewed journals;
2. focused on school age students kindergarten through high school;
3. focused on students with severe or profound developmental disabilities (on occasion studies are included that focused on multiple disability populations

[e.g., Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000]). The rationale for including these studies was because the findings provide important information about teacher attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion;

4. were conducted in general education settings; and
5. focused on the experiences of general education teachers or peers.

Occasionally, studies are included that investigated additional members such as special education teachers or parents because they included important and relevant findings. However, findings for other populations (e.g., special education teachers or parents) are not reported.

Empirical Support for Inclusion

Exploring the characteristics and benefits of general education settings is an important starting point for understanding the ways in which inclusion may offer opportunities not available in the self contained setting. Researchers have approached empirical support for inclusion through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings from these works are organized in the following ways: social opportunities, perceptions of general education peers, equal instructional opportunities, and IEP quality and outcomes.

Social opportunities. Participation in the general education setting serves as a forum for meeting students without disabilities (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994). Such placements may increase the opportunities for students with severe disabilities to have social contacts and develop social networks (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994). Social contact in the general education setting offers students with severe disabilities the opportunity to meet same age peers and develop networks of support. For example, in a study

comparing 16 students in full inclusion classes and 16 students in self contained classes, Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, and Goetz (1994) found that students with more significant disabilities spent more time overall in integrated school activities (i.e., activities that included the presence of peers without disabilities) when placed in general education classes and had significantly more reciprocal interactions with their peers without disabilities than students in self contained settings. Such interactions may positively effect levels of happiness. Logan, Jacobs, Gast, Streu-Murray, Daino, & Skula (1998) observed that four of the five participants with profound disabilities displayed more frequent happiness behavior (e.g., percentage of intervals smiling was present) when in the presence of typical peers than when with peers with disabilities.

The social benefits of inclusion were supported by Fryxell and Kennedy (1995) and Kennedy, Shukla, and Fryxell (1997) who found that middle school students with severe disabilities placed in general education settings were more likely to have social contacts and interaction with their typical peers than counterparts in self contained settings. These researchers also found that included students were significantly more likely to have richer friendship networks (e.g., interacting with and receiving support from a greater number of peers without disabilities, longer durations of interaction). Kennedy et al. (1997) further found that social networks developed in inclusive settings were more durable over time, with some networks lasting as long as 19 months. The benefits of social interaction may extend beyond the school day. For example, McDonnell, Hardman, Hightower, and Kiefer-O'Donnell (1991) found that students were more likely to have after school interaction opportunities when they participated in general education classes and routines.

Opportunity for interaction may not secure one's popularity however. Using a sociometric assessment, Mu, Siegel, and Allinder (2000) found that participating students with severe disabilities in the study had mixed social status with their peers. Three participants were described as having average social status, while two participants were considered to have rejected status. Although opportunities for social interactions were available, they were less than those available for the students' typical peers. These findings were similar to those of Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, and Hollowood (1992) and Hall (1994) who also found that participating students had mixed social status ranging from very popular to rejected.

General Education Students' Perceptions. As inclusion becomes a more frequent experience, the attitudes of general education peers towards students with severe disabilities may become more positive (Krajewski & Hyde, 2000). When peers have positive attitudes towards students with severe disabilities, they may be more likely to initiate and maintain social contact and relationships. Several researchers have investigated how general education students perceive their peers with severe disabilities. Membership, characteristics of membership, and beneficial outcomes have been key findings in much of this research.

The amount of time a student spends in the classroom may contribute to the extent that classmates perceive the child as a member or friend. Exposure to students with disabilities, either direct (e.g., participation with a student with disabilities) or indirect (e.g., story books) may be an important variable in the acceptance of students with disabilities included in general education settings (Favazza & Odom, 1997). Presence and participation in class activities may contribute to the extent that the student with

severe disabilities is considered a class member or friend. For example, middle school students in Williams and Downing (1998) expressed that regularly participating in class activities contributed to the belief that their peers with severe disabilities were members of the group.

Using interview and observation methods, Schnorr (1990) investigated the perspectives of first graders who had the experience of a student with severe disabilities coming into the class on a part time basis. Although the focus student came to the class on a daily basis, his brief stay was not enough for other students to consider him a part of their group identity. Free time, shared experiences, and longevity all contributed to the first graders perceptions of friendships. His absence from the majority of the class day inhibited his ability to participate in key activities such as free time and build a shared history with other members of the class.

Fisher, Pumpian, and Sax (1998) had similar findings with the high school population. These researchers compared the attitudes of students attending inclusive (i.e., services and supports within general education classes) versus mainstream (i.e., services and supports provided in self-contained classes with opportunities to be in settings with peers without disabilities) high schools. Although students from both high schools generally held positive attitudes toward their peers with disabilities as measured by their responses to survey items, some differences did exist. Of the responding students at the inclusive high school, 80% recommended continuing with inclusive practices, while only 59% of students in the mainstreamed high school made the same recommendation.

In addition to presence and participation, the classroom environment may influence peer acceptance of the student with severe disabilities. Expectations of peers

may be one variable to consider. Cook and Semmel (1999) hypothesized that peer acceptance of students with severe disabilities may be in part due to the characteristics of the group in which the student is included. Using sociometric nominations elementary students nominated the peers they would most like to play with during recess. The researchers evaluated differences between three student groups, no disability, mild, and severe disability. The findings indicated that students with severe disabilities were more likely to be accepted in nonheterogeneous (i.e., general class) class settings. This means that when in heterogeneous (i.e., special class) classrooms, students with severe disabilities do not stand out as different because all students have a wide range of needs and as such are held by their peers to a certain set of expectations for membership. The authors concluded that in nonheterogeneous classes, students with severe disabilities do stand out as different and are thus held by their peers to different expectations. In nonheterogeneous settings peers expect that students with severe disabilities will engage in behaviors that are not typical to the group. Because of this expectation in nonheterogeneous settings peers are more likely to accept the student even when the student does things that are not typical to the group.

Teacher behavior is a second classroom environment variable that influence peer acceptance. Williams and Downing (1998) investigated the meaning of classroom memberships for students using focus group and individual interview methods. A total of 51 middle school students participated including 4 students with severe disabilities. Students in Williams and Downing (1998) believed that the teacher held an important role in creating an atmosphere of membership and acceptance for all students. Responding to interview questions, middle school students in this qualitative study

identified teacher behaviors such as treating students equally, joking around, and helping to understand as all contributing to feelings of membership. These students also believed that the teacher could enhance the membership and acceptance of students with severe disabilities by being consistent with expectations, helping them to fit into the class, making conversation with the student, calling on the student, using the same grading system, and making sure they have a part in the activity.

The construction of class arrangements and activities were additional classroom environment variables viewed important by the general education students in Williams and Downing (1998). For example, responding students believed that group activities, seating arrangements, opportunities to make choices about activities, flexibility with class schedules and making activities fun were all class environment factors that students perceived contributed to membership and acceptance

A number of factors contributed to nonmembership in general education settings. A consistent theme across several studies was the extent that engaging in disruptive behavior, could potentially lead to nonmembership and a lack of acceptance by peers . General education students in Williams and Downing (1998) believed that, engaging in inappropriate behavior and being disruptive contributed to nonmembership in the classroom. These students also believed that looking different and not having friends could also contribute to nonmembership. Similarly, the students in Fisher et al. (1998) cited distracting behaviors as the main reason for why students did not think inclusive or mainstreamed practices should continue. Comments from the students in Fisher et al. included both things that the student did during class that were distracting or perceived as annoying by students as well as the increased need for teacher attention in class due to

unique learning needs. The extent that the student with severe disabilities engaged in inappropriate behavior was also a concern for students in Peck, Donaldson, and Pezzoli (1990). Responding general education students expressed that inappropriate behavior lead to difficulty with their relationship with the student as they felt reluctant to provide feedback about the behavior (Peck et al., 1990).

In addition to inappropriate and disruptive behavior, several classroom environment factors could also lead to feelings of nonmembership and a lack of acceptance. Students in Williams and Downing (1998) identified teacher behaviors such as being unfair, not following the class rules but holding students to the class rules, being intolerant or rude, and not making students feel comfortable as potentially contributing to nonmembership. When students with severe disabilities were not present for or a part of the activities, projects, or discussion students in Williams and Downing (1998) tended to view them as nonmembers.

Several researchers have investigated peers perceptions regarding the outcomes or benefits peers received from either inclusion or their relationship with a peer with a severe disability. Peck et al. (1990) used semi-structured interviews to explore the perceptions of 21 high school students regarding the benefits they received from their interactions with peers who have severe disabilities. The students with disabilities were not full time members in general education, but were integrated into a variety of academic and nonacademic activities. Among the benefits identified by students included positive influences on their own self-concept, how they perceived others with differences, increased tolerance of people in general, and the enjoyment of having the friendship. According to the authors, one reason why the students may have had such

positive experiences was the thorough planning and implementation of the social integration program. The logistics of high school may be another possible explanation for why these students may have more readily considered their peer with a disability a friend. In high school, it is expected that students switch classes, are not with the same teacher, and have schedules different than their friends.

York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughey (1992) surveyed middle school students, teachers, and parents about their perceptions of the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. Of the 181 students surveyed, 89.5% indicated that including students with severe disabilities into general education classes was a good idea. When asked if they learned anything by having a peer with a severe disability in their classes, 63% of students indicated that they had learned something about the student's positive attributes, with some students commenting that the focus student was just like them. Of the responding students, 78% felt that students with severe disabilities should be included in at least some classes, with a smaller number of respondents, 12.69%, indicating that they should be involved in all classes.

Helmstetter, Peck, and Giangreco (1994) surveyed 166 high school students across the state of Washington to investigate what they perceived were the outcomes of interacting with peers with moderate or severe disabilities. Similar to the results of Peck et al. (1990), Helmstetter et al. found that high school students perceived a number of beneficial outcomes as a result of their interactions with peers with moderate and severe disabilities. Most notably, these students experienced growth in their perceptions of diversity and personal values, while others believed they had improved status with other general education students. The authors indicated that there was a significant relationship

between students who shared a classroom with a peer with a disability and a greater degree of tolerance for others, than were peers who were involved through tutoring or helping. Additionally, students who received credit for their interactions were significantly more positive in terms of their personal status and benefit they received from the interaction.

Equal Instructional Opportunities. In addition to the positive impact of inclusion on social opportunities and relationships with peers, researchers have been interested in similarities and differences between the instructional opportunities of general education versus special class placements for students with severe disabilities. The goal of such research is to determine which placement results in better instructional opportunities for learners with severe disabilities. Although a number of studies have investigated the similarities and differences of inclusive versus special class placements, thus far, the research has not conclusively found one better than the other. Rather, there is great variability in the findings which indicate that general class and special class placements are more similar than they are different.

The instructional arrangement (e.g., one to one instruction) is one feature that has been evaluated by researchers. Interestingly, students with severe disabilities may be more likely to have instruction focused exclusively on them when in the general education class as compared to special class placement (Logan & Keefe, 1997; McDonnell, Thorson, & McQuivey, 2000). Logan and Keefe (1997) and Logan and Malone (1998) found that students included in general education classrooms received significantly more instruction within a one-to-one format than their general education

classroom peers. Helmstetter et al. (1998) found comparable amounts of one to one instruction in special versus general class placements.

Another instructional opportunity that has been evaluated is the extent that included students are receiving instruction from the general education classroom teacher. McDonnell et al. (2000) found that included students were less likely to receive instruction from the general education teacher than their nondisabled peers. In contrast, Logan and Malone (1998) found that general education teachers were significantly more likely than any other personnel to teach included students in included settings. However, Helmstetter et al. (1998) found that paraprofessionals were the most likely to provide instruction to students with severe disabilities in the self contained setting with peers being significantly more involved in the student's instruction when in the general education class. Similar to Helmstetter et al. (1998), Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, and MacFarland (1997) observed that paraprofessionals most often had the responsibility of educating students with disabilities included in general education.

In terms of the opportunity for instructional time, Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, and Palombaro (1994) found that students with severe disabilities used the most available instructional time when compared to their randomly matched peers without disabilities in the same general education class, and a comparison group in another general education class. Logan, Bakeman, and Keefe (1997) found that students were more engaged when being taught by the general education teacher in comparison to the special education teacher in the general education setting. Based on the findings presented, it is not clear if this was a function of teacher role (e.g., general versus special education) or teacher personality. While McDonnell, Thornson, and McQivey (1998)

found that students responded equitably regardless of who the instructor was. High level of teacher engagement may be a function of the teacher's attitude toward having the student in their classroom and how they view the role of the paraprofessional. For example, Giangreco, Broer, and Edelman (2001) observed that teachers who were highly engaged with the included student expressed a sense of ownership for the education of the included student and tended to use instructional strategies that promoted the active participation of all students. General education teachers in Giangreco et al. (2001) who displayed high levels of interaction with students with disabilities tended to use paraprofessional support judiciously relying more on inclusive strategies for all children than one to one instruction by paraprofessional staff.

Participation in whole group instruction may be another opportunity afforded students included in the general education setting. For example, Helmstetter et al. (1998) and Logan and Malone (1998) found that students included in general classes had significantly more opportunities for whole group instruction, while Logan and Keefe (1997) found comparable amounts of whole group instruction between general and special class placements. McDonnell et al. (2000) found that although students with severe disabilities had whole group opportunities, their peers without disabilities had significantly more whole group opportunity and less individualized instructional time. Despite the opportunity, whole group instruction may not produce the highest levels of student engagement. Students in Logan et al. (1997) and McDonnell et al. (1998) were observed to have the highest engagement levels when the teacher used a one to one instructional format or a small group format with their attention focused on the target student. The lowest levels of student engagement occurred during whole group activities.

Increased amounts of one to one instruction may be a function of the severity of the student's disability, however, based on the reported results, this cannot be for certain.

In terms of engaged and instructional time, students with disabilities in inclusive settings appear to be equally or more engaged than students with disabilities in self contained settings. For example, Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, and Goetz (1994) found that students in general class placements were significantly more engaged than counterparts in special classes. Similarly, Helmstetter et al. (1998) found that students in special class placements had significantly more noninstructional time (i.e., no instruction occurring) than their counterparts in general classes. Logan and Keefe (1997) found comparable amounts of engaged time between the special class and general class for students with severe disabilities. Finally, McDonnell, Thorson, McQuivey, and Keifer-O'Donnell (1997) found no significant differences in engaged time between students with severe disabilities in inclusive classes and their same class and same grade peers. However, students with severe disabilities were significantly more likely to engage in unacceptable behaviors (e.g., aggression, noncompliance) than were their peers (McDonnell et al., 1997).

IEP Quality and Outcomes. Better IEP quality and outcomes is another potential benefit of inclusion. Generally, studies have found that IEPs for students with severe disabilities who were included in general classes had significantly higher ratings of quality (Hunt, Goetz, & Anderson, 1986; Hunt & Ferron-Davis, 1992; Hunt et al., 1994). Across studies, indicators of best practice were used to rate IEPs that included age-appropriateness, functionality, and generalizability. One additional difference found by Hunt et al. (1994) was that IEP objectives written following full time placement in

general education classrooms were significantly more likely to contain opportunities for participation with peers without disabilities.

In an early study, Saint-Laurent and Lessard (1978) found no differences in skill attainment for students in special versus regular classes, even when comparing functional and traditional curriculums. Later, Brinker and Thorpe (1984) found that students with severe disabilities did achieve greater gains on IEP objectives when instruction occurred within an integrated context. In terms of content, Logan and Keefe (1992) and Logan and Malone (1998) found that students in general education settings were more likely to have instruction that was focused on academic skills rather than functional skills. Using a longitudinal case study approach, Ryndak, Morrison, and Sommerstein (1999) observed changes in instructional content (i.e., increased focus on literacy instruction) and delivery for one young woman following placement in the general education setting. These changes produced the opportunity for this young woman to develop literacy skills that had previously been ignored. While emphasis on functional skills may be greater in the special class, providing instruction within functional returns may not be (Helmstetter et al., 1998).

Summary. Despite the contradictory findings in some areas (i.e., instructional opportunities) the benefits of including students with severe developmental disabilities appear supported by empirical research (Freeman & Alkin, 2000). Taken as a whole, the findings from the reviewed studies support four common findings. First, students with severe disabilities may have greater social opportunities and be perceived more positively by peers in regular class placements. Hunt et al. (1994), Kennedy & Itkonen, (1994), Fryxell and Kennedy (1995) and Kennedy et al. (1997) found that students had increased

opportunity for social relations when in included settings. Key to creating this opportunity is the extent that students are not only physically present in the setting but are active participants in activities and share with the experiences of the class. Students in Schnorr (1990), Williams and Downing (1998), and Fisher et al. (1998) indicated that presence and participation were critical to determining whether students with disabilities were perceived positively or as members of the class by their nondisabled peers.

Second, instructional opportunities available to students with severe disabilities are as good in general education classrooms as special education classrooms. Much of the research (e.g., Helmstetter et al., 1998; Logan & Keefe, 1997) comparing placements indicated that students with severe disabilities received instruction comparable to special class placements. However, the type of instructional arrangement (e.g., whole group versus one to one) used and amount of teacher attention may contribute to the extent the student is engaged in either setting.

Third, the quality of IEP objectives may be improved when students are included in regular class settings. Hunt et al. (1986), Hunt and Ferron-Davis (1992) and Hunt et al. (1994) found that IEP objectives written for students in included settings were more consistent with established best practices in the field of special education than were those written for students in self-contained settings. Further, the content taught in inclusive settings may focus more on academic skills as opposed to traditional life skills providing the student with educational opportunities that may otherwise be missed.

Finally, challenging behaviors may place students at risk for nonmembership and isolation. McDonnell et al. (1997) found that students with severe disabilities were significantly more likely to engage in behaviors considered unacceptable. Such

behaviors may isolate the included student from their peers. General education students in Peck et al. (1990), Williams and Downing (1998), and Fisher et al. (1998) all identified disruptive and inappropriate behaviors as either contributing to a student's nonmembership in the setting or as the source of difficulty with their relationship with a student with severe disabilities.

If instruction is equal, opportunities for peer relationships are increased, and quality of the IEP is better than it may be surmised that inclusion classrooms offer equivalent or better opportunities for learners with severe disabilities.

Studies Investigating the Perceptions and Attitudes of Teachers Toward Inclusion

The previous section provided a rationale for the inclusion of students with severe developmental disabilities in general education settings based on the potential for beneficial outcomes. The attitudes and beliefs of general education teachers regarding including this population of students is another important dimension that requires consideration. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers have investigated how general education teachers regard the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. In the following sections, the research on teacher attitudes toward inclusion is reviewed to determine (1) the nature of teacher attitudes toward inclusion and (2) what teachers believe are important factors that contribute to success.

In an early study of teacher attitudes, Williams, Fox, Thousand, and Fox (1990) surveyed 212 general and special education teachers who had experiences teaching students with severe disabilities in inclusive settings. These researchers found that teachers in this study who had administrative support, preservice and inservice training experiences, flexibility with scheduling, and collaboration between general and special

educators were more likely to implement exemplary practices. The respondents in this study identified lack of time for planning and collaboration as a significant barrier to implementing best inclusive practices.

Responding to written questionnaires, general education teachers in York et al. (1992) described the acceptance of students with disabilities by their peers and the included student's enjoyment of doing the work as the best part of inclusion. These teachers believed that it was important to continue with inclusion efforts describing a number of positive outcomes for themselves (e.g., personal reward), the special educators (e.g., being more a part of the school), the general education students (e.g., increase in understanding), and the students with disabilities (e.g., increase in interactions). Although benefits were experienced, the teachers did raise some concerns including a need for ongoing communication between general and special education teachers, knowing how to include the student in activities and lessons, limited time to work with the student, and large class sizes.

Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993) used semi-structured interview methods to describe the experiences and perspectives of 19 general education teachers who had students with severe disabilities in their classrooms. The respondents taught grades ranging from Kindergarten to ninth. Initially, the teachers felt reluctant and concerned about including a student with severe disabilities in their classroom. However, as teachers gained more experience with the student and inclusion their perceptions transformed from those of worry and angst to a sense of success and enjoyment. Giangreco et al. described these changes as occurring gradually over time. According to the respondents, they changed in a number of ways that included feeling

more willing to interact with the student, growing professionally by learning new teaching skills, and experiencing a change in attitude toward the student and inclusion. Teachers expressed changes in their personal and professional selves as well. Some viewed themselves as being more reflective, while others had feelings of pride and confidence. The teachers described the importance of being asked to volunteer to take a student with severe disabilities and to be offered needed supports.

Using interviews and observation, Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995a) explored the meaning of change for 26 general education teachers from five school districts experiencing integration reform. General education teachers in this study expressed initial concern about having a student with severe disabilities in their classrooms. They questioned what type of work the student could do as well as their own ability to serve the child. These teachers expressed the importance of someone explaining to them why the student was going to be included in their classroom. In addition to understanding the purpose, responding teachers also discussed the importance of clarification so that they knew what was expected of them and what to expect from the student. The teachers in this study discussed the importance of respecting their professional autonomy by asking them to volunteer to take a student with disabilities and to have the freedom to make decisions as needed. Teachers expressed concern over the time and effort that would be required to include the student in their classroom. Some teachers were particularly concerned that they would be responsible for teaching the student despite not having any training in special education. Responding teachers also discussed the need for adequate support. For these teachers, support included materials and resources, administrator encouragement, special education support, and respect for

their authority as teachers. Despite their initial concerns (e.g., questioning their own ability to serve the student with disabilities), the general education teachers in Janney et al. (1995a) believed that everyone benefited from the inclusion experience. In some cases, these rewards were greater than those that they initially anticipated.

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995b) reported findings similar to that of Janney et al. (1995a) when they interviewed 53 special and general education teachers and administrators from five school districts regarding their inclusion experience. Initially, the general education respondents were hesitant to include a student with severe disabilities in their classrooms. However, with the provision of needed supports and first hand experiences, teachers became more relaxed and confident. General education teachers believed that professional development was an important step in building their confidence and attitudes. For these general education teachers, professional development should address why the student is being included and a clarification of what is expected of the teacher. According to these teachers, it was important that the special education teachers formed a good rapport with general educators, solicited their input for planning, and were present in the class if needed. Finally, general education teachers perceived themselves as facilitators of student to student relationships that fostered membership of the students with severe disabilities. Both general and special education teachers believed it was important for the administrators to set a positive tone in the building by encouraging teaming and professional autonomy. One example of this was asking teachers to volunteer and including all members in the planning process.

Block and Rizzo (1995) surveyed physical education teachers to determine their attitudes toward students with significant disabilities in their classes and to identify

predictors of favorable attitudes toward these students by the surveyed teachers. These researchers found that physical education teachers' attitudes were undecided, however, they were more comfortable including students with severe as opposed to profound disabilities. In general, physical education teachers had more positive attitudes when they had prior coursework in special education and adapted physical education. Additionally, quality teaching experiences and perceived competence as a teacher also correlated positively with favorable attitudes.

York-Barr, Schultz, Doyle, Kronberg, and Crossett (1996) interviewed 17 administrators, parents, general education teachers, and special education teachers from one school district to better understand the attributes that characterize professionals in inclusive schools. The general education teachers in this study believed they had strong support and commitment from their special education colleagues and to a lesser degree, their administrators. These teachers viewed inclusion as being of value for all students in their classes and focused on the classroom as a community where all are welcome. Teachers also described a number of personal reflections including a sense of self-efficacy and belief that inclusion was more a part of social reform than best special education practice.

Responding to a survey conducted by Villa Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996), experienced general education teachers in 32 school sites were significantly more likely to hold positive attitudes toward inclusion and working with special educators than those without such experience. The general education teachers in this study believed that administrative support, opportunities for collaboration, and experience were important factors contributing to their attitudes about inclusion.

Smith (1997) used interviews and participant observation to describe the inclusion efforts of a ninth grade team at an urban high school. Participants included one special education teacher, one teacher assistant, and three general education teachers. This team of teachers had experiences with a wide range of students that also included students with severe disabilities. For some team members, the more significant the disability, the less favorable they were toward inclusive opportunities that subsequently led to the student not participating in more traditional academic classes. Teachers on the team described including both social and academic goals in their classes and expressed a desire for students to reach their potential. They also discussed the emergence of social opportunities and experiences for the focus student as being important. Although the general and special education teachers felt challenges such as the difficulty level of high school curriculum and traditional class formats, they believed that the strategies they were using to include the focus student were also helpful for other students in the class. Teachers found support in collegial opportunities to share ideas and discuss strategies. There was a belief among team members that the inclusion experience had impacted their own professional practice both in terms of collaboration and their skill at accommodating unique needs.

Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) surveyed 188 general education teachers to investigate how they responded to including students with disabilities in their classrooms. The researchers used four separate surveys previously established in other studies, The Response to Inclusion Survey, Teacher Efficacy Scale, Differentiated Teaching Survey, and the School Climate Survey. These researchers found that experienced teachers were more likely to hold hostile attitudes, as measured by survey responses, towards students

with mental retardation, behavior disorders, and learning disabilities, even when they used differentiated instruction in their classrooms to accommodate for diverse learning needs. In contrast, teachers held less hostile attitudes toward students with physical disabilities or hearing impairments. Teachers' attitudes tended to be more hostile toward inclusion when they did not perceive themselves as having the opportunity to collaborate with others. Teachers with low personal efficacy, as measured by responses on the Teacher Efficacy Scale, were also more likely to express anxiety about including a student with a disability. Class size was an additional variable that contributed to teachers' anxiety about inclusion.

Using semi-structured interviews and participation observation, Coots, Bishop, and Grenot-Scheyer (1998) explored the perspectives of four general education teachers who had the experience of including students with severe disabilities. Responding teachers expressed a number of supports that they perceived themselves as needing to ensure successful inclusion. Similar to the teachers in Giangreco et al. (1993) and Janney et al. (1995b), the teachers in Coots et al. (1998) believed that it was important they were recognized as autonomous professionals who were the primary decision makers for all students in their class, including students with disabilities. Teachers also viewed additional personnel as supportive, in particular the aide who was there on a day to day basis working with the student. They also found related service personnel supportive in that they provided both direct service to the student and consultation to the teacher. Some teachers mentioned the inclusion facilitator as a source of support because they could provide specific information about the student. However, not all teachers were in agreement. For some teachers, the inclusion facilitator was not supportive because they

came during times when the teacher was unavailable to meet with them or made recommendations that were, in their opinion, inconsistent with the student's needs. Coots et al. (1998) described teachers as having transformational experiences from their initial exposure to later in the school year. They emphasized a process of acclimation where teachers and general education peers became more comfortable with the student and inclusion over time.

Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski, and Costanza (1999) used qualitative methods to explore the perceptions of six general and special education teachers regarding their experiences including students with severe disabilities in a rural school district. Because these authors conducted several interviews with each teacher across the school year, they were able to capture changes or transformations in the teachers' perceptions about inclusion. Initially both general and special education teachers expressed hesitation, uncertainty, and some negative attitudes over what would happen. As the school year progressed and teachers had the experience of including a student, they were described as less apprehensive and more confident about what they were doing.

In addition to transformations, several content specific themes emerged through the authors' analysis. Teachers discussed the importance of time to plan together, but not always having the time or resources to do so. In addition to day to day planning, responding teachers in Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) discussed the importance of planning prior to the student being included. They suggested having specific information and opportunities to observe the student prior to the school year beginning. Receiving information directly from the special educator instead of through second hand sources

was also important. For one general educator the opportunity to view a video tape of the student prior to having her in the class helped to diminish feelings of being overwhelmed. In terms of outcomes, general and special education teachers in this study perceived the development of social opportunities as a positive experience. For at least one general education teacher, she could see changes in the way peers treated the student with severe disabilities from the beginning of the year, with relationships evolving from that of a helper to a friend. The general and special education teachers found meaning in the targeted students' successes and the rewards the teachers themselves felt when the student was successful. These teachers also expressed the benefits experienced by peers without disabilities.

At times, general and special education teachers in Hamre-Nietupski, et al. (1999) were frustrated by the need to create adaptations for materials and content, in particular, adaptations that would produce opportunities for meaningful participation. For some general educators not knowing how to make the adaptation or who to ask for assistance created frustration. One general education teacher described the special educator, speech, and physical therapist as providing support and needed information. Another general education teacher expressed frustration over a lack of administrative support and resources or materials to support the needs of the focus student.

Cook, Tankersley, Cook, and Landrum (2000) examined 70 general education teachers' attitudes toward students with mild and severe disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers taught a range of grades from kindergarten to sixth. Teachers in Cook et al. (2000) nominated three of their students in response to four nomination prompts: (a) If you could keep one student another year for the sheer joy of it, whom would you pick, (b)

If you could devote all of your attention to a child who concerns you a great deal, whom would you pick?, (c) If a parent were to drop by for a conference, whose child would you be least prepared to talk about?, (d) If your class was to be reduced by one child, whom would you be relieved to have removed? Teachers' comments were then coded using four different attitudinal categories (a) attachment, (a) concern, (a) indifference, or (a) rejection. The results of the analysis indicated that teachers were significantly less likely to nominate students with disabilities in the attitudinal category of attachment and significantly more likely to nominate these students in the concern or rejection categories. Additionally, comments made about students in the concern and rejection categories were more likely to be negative descriptors of the student and their social-personal characteristics. Further, students nominated in the rejection category were more often described as the cause of the problem using behavior descriptors such as "disruptive" and "highly unorganized" (Cook et al., 2000, pp. 125). Although this study did not focus exclusively on students with severe disabilities it offers important findings regarding how teachers perceive students with disabilities, particularly students who engage in difficult behaviors.

In a follow up study using the same nomination procedures as Cook et al. (2000), Cook (2001) reported similar findings. A total of 70 general education teachers in grades kindergarten through sixth participated. Students with obvious and severe disabilities were overrepresented in the attitudinal category of indifference, while students with hidden disabilities (e.g., learning disability) were overrepresented in the attitudinal category of rejection. Cook (2001) theorized that for students with severe disabilities, general education teachers do not feel prepared to meet the unique learning needs of this

population and therefore limit their engagement with the student. According to Cook (2001), teachers may be expecting students with obvious disabilities to engage in behaviors that are outside of typical performance and therefore are more tolerant. In contrast, student inappropriate behaviors and negative attitudes were the most common reasons provided by teachers for why they nominated students with hidden disabilities in the rejection category. However, it was not clear from either of these investigations (Cook et al., 2000; Cook, 2001) whether teachers' attitudes toward students with obvious and severe disabilities would be affected by the display of student problem behaviors by this specific group. Further, it is not clear why teacher participants in both studies appeared to hold more negative attitudes toward students with disabilities than participants in other studies reviewed. One possible explanation is that teachers in other studies reviewed (e.g., Janney et al., 1995a/b; York-Barr et al., 1996) either received technical assistance on inclusion or were the focus of school-wide reform or inclusion efforts, thus it is possible that participants in these studies were in environments that were more supportive of inclusion education, than participants in Cook et al. (2000) or Cook (2001).

Summary. A number of important findings can be gleaned from the research reviewed on teacher attitudes toward inclusion. Taken as a whole, the studies support four common findings regarding the nature of teacher attitudes and the factors needed for success. First, teachers perceived support for their work in supporting a student with disabilities as an important feature of inclusion (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1995a/b; Smith, 1997). For teachers in these studies, the types of supports described varied. For example, general education teachers in Janney et al. (1995a/b) discussed the

need for materials, administrator encouragement, and special education support, while, the general education teachers in Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) discussed needing opportunities for planning prior to the student coming to their class. In another example, teachers in Coots et al. (1998) discussed the need for related service personnel and paraprofessionals. The implication from these studies is that teachers suggest that while the need for support is common among teachers the types of supports needed may vary depending on the teacher, the student, the class characteristics, and building culture.

A second common finding on teacher attitudes and supports for inclusion is that general education teachers expressed a need for respect and professional autonomy when including a student with severe disabilities in their classroom. Teachers in Giangreco et al. (1993) and York et al. (1992) described the importance of being asked to volunteer to take the student. In addition to being asked, teachers in Janney et al. (1995a/b) and Coots et al. (1998) believed that it was important that they were recognized as the primary instructional decision makers for all students in their class, including the student with disabilities. Respecting the general education teacher's role as an autonomous professional may be an important variable that influences attitudes toward inclusion. A practical example of this was described by teachers in Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) who were frustrated by the inclusion facilitator because they came to the classroom during times when the general education teacher was unavailable to speak with them.

A third common finding on the nature of teacher attitudes and support needs for inclusion is that over time general education teachers may become more comfortable with inclusion once they have had the opportunity to try it first hand. Teachers in Giangreco et al. (1993), Janney et al. (1995a/b), and Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) described feeling

concerned and uncertain when initially including the student with severe disabilities. However, over time teachers' attitudes appeared to transform from that of concern to confidence. Not feeling adequately prepared may be one reason why teachers are initially hesitant. The physical education teachers in Block and Rizzo (1995) held more positive attitudes when they had prior coursework in special education and adapted physical education. Fear of the unknown may contribute to a teacher feeling hesitant. The teachers in Janney et al. (1995a/b) described the importance of clarifying roles and expectations prior to beginning inclusion. According to these teachers it was important to explain why the student was going to be included and what their responsibilities would be. Once teachers have the opportunity to be successful with the student, their initial concerns appear to be replaced with feelings of confidence and reward. In some cases the reward exceeded the teachers' expectations (Janney et al., 1995a).

The extent that student problem behaviors may contribute to a teacher's attitude toward the student and inclusion is a fourth common finding on teacher attitudes and supports for inclusion. Cook et al. (2000) and Cook (2001) found that teachers were significantly more likely to nominate students with mild and severe disabilities in the categories of indifference, concern, and rejection. In turn, they were less likely to nominate students with disabilities in the attitudinal category of attachment. Cook (2001) discussed a possible relationship between the obviousness of the disability and the teachers' attitude. For example, teachers were more likely to nominate students with obvious disabilities in the category of indifference while nominating students with hidden disabilities in the category of rejection. One explanation may be that teachers expect students with more severe disabilities to act in ways that are outside of typical

performance. While students with hidden disabilities, such as a learning disability, are held to expectations that are similar to their peers without disabilities. Teachers' comments indicated that student behaviors and attitudes were the most common reason for nomination in the rejection category. This underscores the importance of understanding the extent to which problem behavior influences attitudes of acceptance toward students with more severe developmental disabilities in general education settings. If teachers believe that they are unable to influence positive change they may be likely to develop attitudes of rejection, instead of indifference toward these students. In any case, regardless of attitudes of indifference or rejection, these two studies suggest that general education teachers need additional support to help them feel more prepared to serve students with severe disabilities in their classrooms.

Although confidence can be placed in the studies reviewed, several important limitations need to be discussed. First, eight of the fifteen studies reviewed used qualitative methods to gather data (e.g., Giangreco et al., 2001; Smith, 1997). Increasingly, qualitative research methodology has been used to explore a variety of phenomena and experiences in the special education field.

Focusing on a small number of purposefully selected cases, qualitative research provides rich and detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences. The benefit of this approach is that it offers the reader insights about the respondents' personal reflections and meaning they derived from their experience. While this allows the researcher to capture the respondents' experiences, a potential limitation of this methodology is the extent that the findings apply to other students, teachers, or school districts. For example, Smith (1997), Janney et al. (1995a), Giangreco et al. (1993),

York et al. (1992), Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999), and Janney et al. (1995b) cited small and unique samples as a limitation of their studies. Because the focus is on the unique experiences of a purposefully selected group, the findings highlight the idiosyncratic nature of the inclusive environments. In other words what inclusion looks like and how it is experienced may be unique to an individual's circumstances (e.g., teacher, focus student, building culture). Because of this, continued exploration of inclusion experiences is needed until multiple variations in service delivery and support are presented by research.

A second potential limitation for two of the studies is the extent that the participants had first hand experiences with the researchers prior to the study being conducted. For example, Janney et al. (1995a) and Janney et al. (1995b) provided various forms of technical assistance to the respondents and or their school districts to promote inclusion success. Given this relationship, respondents may have been influenced by the expectation or biases of the researchers, to say something about their experience, particularly to be positive about their inclusion experience. For example, Janney et al. (1995a/b) expected that teachers would discuss the amount of work needed for inclusion, but that the effort was worth the outcome. Instead, all but two respondents stated that inclusion was not that much work. It is possible, that respondents were influenced by familiarity with the researchers' and their participation in technical assistance.

A third potential limitation is the extent that researchers relied on respondents' ability to recall their past experiences. Over time it is possible that the respondents' interpretation of their experience may have changed and did not provide an accurate

picture of what happened when they were involved in the inclusion situation. Context and perspective at any given point in time can influence the data being collected. Researchers tried to account for this using different methods. Some researchers attempted to triangulate their data by using multiple data sources such as interviews and observation (e.g., Janney et al., 1995b; Smith, 1997). While, Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) interviewed teachers on three separate occasions over the course of the school year as they were experiencing inclusion. In doing this, the experience was fresh for the participants and as such they did not have to rely on their long-term memory to reconstruct the experience.

A fourth limitation is the extent that the researchers accurately interpreted the information obtained during the interviews and captured the participants' experiences . Giangreco et al. (1993) were the only researchers to report using member checks as a way to establish accuracy of their interpretations. These researchers prepared written reports that were then reviewed and commented on by participants. Some researchers attempted to establish accuracy of interpretations by using reliability procedures. For example, York et al. (1992) calculated reliability for interpretation of participants' written responses. While Hamre-Nietupski et al. (1999) used weekly meetings to compare and contrast their coding and interpretation within a research team. Working in research teams was used by some researchers to strengthen the credibility of their findings (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; York et al., 1992). However, reliability of data coding does not guarantee validity in terms of capturing the participant's meaning.

One limitation of the survey studies discussed is the extent that general education teachers and students with severe disabilities were the primary focus of the research. All of the survey studies in this review used school personnel from a variety of job positions (e.g., general education teachers, special education teachers, and principals) and went across disability areas. Since these studies did not focus exclusively on general education teachers or on students with severe disabilities, future investigations are needed that are designed specifically to understand the perspectives and needs of general education teachers serving this population of students.

A second limitation of the survey research concerns the absence of an explanation for the findings obtained. While reviewed studies offered insight about the type of attitudes teachers held toward students with disabilities, additional information is needed to describe why and how these attitudes were formed. For example Cook et al. (2000) and Cook (2001) reported teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities but did not capture any information regarding why teachers held those attitudes, especially toward students with severe disabilities who engage in problem behavior. Information such as descriptions of behavior problems, perceived support needs and availability, as well as clearer explanations of the type of students is generally needed in future research to better understand teachers' strong held beliefs on inclusion.

Studies Investigating the Support Needs of Teachers

One of the key findings from the research on teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusion is the need for various types of support for the general education teacher. A few studies have attempted to understand what supports were needed and in some cases the extent to which teachers received them. Wolery, Gessler-Werts, Snyder, and Lisowski

(1995) sought to identify the types of resources and supports that were needed by general and special education teachers to include children with substantial disabilities in general education classrooms. In addition they were interested in determining the extent to which identified resources were (a) available to the participating teachers and (b) whether the teachers' perceptions of resource need and availability were related to job position, grade level, and their self ratings of success with regard to the inclusion experience.

To answer these questions the researchers distributed surveys to 175 teachers (129 general education teachers and 46 special education teachers) in Pennsylvania who were nominated by their principals as having experience teaching a child with moderate to severe disabilities in general education classrooms. Of the questionnaires returned 158 were usable (90.3%) and included in the analysis. General education teachers comprised 83.6% of the respondents, all of whom taught a single grade.

The results of the survey indicated that respondents perceived discrepancies between needed resources and availability of those resources. With regard to needed resources, general education teachers indicated that training, material resources (e.g., journals), supportive personnel (e.g., paraprofessionals, related services personnel), and regular meetings were all necessary. General Education respondents did not always agree that needed resources were available. Among those resources not available to at least 50% of the responding general education teachers included beginning of the year training, on-going in-services, observing other teachers, full and part time assistants, related services personnel, and weekly contact with families.

For both special and general education respondents, teachers who rated themselves as unsuccessful in the inclusion situation reported a lower availability of

resources than teachers who rated themselves successful or moderately successful in the inclusion situation. Across special and general education teachers, support from the family of the included child was available for 90% of the respondents who rated themselves as extremely successful, 70.8% for teachers who rated themselves as moderately successful and 38.9% of teachers who rated themselves as unsuccessful. Similarly, for both the general and special education teachers, 83.9% of teachers who rated themselves as successful indicated having support from all families in the class. In contrast, 35.5% of teachers (both special and general education) who rated themselves as unsuccessful indicated having support from all families in the class. Finally, all teachers who rated themselves as unsuccessful indicated that training (i.e., in-service and opportunities to observe other teachers) was needed but less than a quarter had it available.

Gessler-Werts, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell, and Salisbury (1996a) continued this line of research by investigating whether teachers' perceptions about the need for and availability of supports varied as a function of the severity of the included child's disability. In this study, teachers in public schools kindergarten through grade six were randomly selected from a national register reflecting geographic regions to the United States proportionate to the number of children living in each region. For each grade 500 randomly selected names were purchased. Of the 500, 300 participants per grade were then selected to receive a survey. A total of 2,100 elementary general and special education teachers were identified. Of the 2,100 surveys mailed, 1,430 (68.1%) were returned usable.

Gessler-Werts et al. (1996a) did not make a distinction between results for general and special educators, therefore all reported results included both teacher populations. Of the respondents, 80.6% had at least one student diagnosed with a disability in their class and of these 74.5% indicated that the student was enrolled on a full time basis. To rate severity, teachers were asked to respond using a 6-point scale (1 = normal, 2 = suspected, 3 = mild, 4 = moderate, 5 = severe, and 6 = profound) on the ABILITIES Index. Seventy six percent of respondents completed all nine areas of the ABILITIES Index and were subsequently divided into two groups, teachers who rated a child above the mean (high rated group) and teachers who rated a child below the mean (low rated group). The mean break point on the 6-point scale was 2.21. Teachers in the low rated group had students who fell within the normal to suspected disability group and teachers in the high rated group rated as having students in the suspected to severe range of disability.

Similar to the Wolery et al. (1995) study, the categories for resources and supports included training, material and physical resources, additional personnel, personal support, contact and meetings. For the items listed in the survey, respondents were asked to rate if the resource or support was needed and whether it was available. Using the ratings of severity, the researchers analyzed the data for support and resource needs for three distinct groups of teachers: no disability, low rated disability group, and high rated disability group.

Using a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA), no significant differences were identified with regard to needing training, material and physical resources, additional personnel, or contact and meetings among the three groups of teachers with varying disability groups. Minimal differences existed between the two groups regarding the

availability of these supports. Personal support was significantly more available to teachers in the low and high disability groups than a teacher in the no disability group. Three items accounted for this difference; support from the family of the included child, support from families of other children in the class, and support from a principal or supervisor. Significantly larger percentages of teachers in the low disability rated group reported having training and personal supports available to them than teachers in the high rated or no disability groups. The researchers concluded that teachers' perceptions of the resources and supports available to them for inclusion do not differ based on whether the teachers perceived all of the children to be within the normal range of functioning or based on their ratings of severity of the included student.

With regard to the perceived necessity of the resources and supports, significantly larger percentages of teachers in the high disability group reported needing resources and supports in the five categories in comparison to teachers in the no disability or low rated group. This finding was consistent for all 29 specific items across the five categories of resources and supports. Teachers in both the high and low rated groups were more likely to report needing more resources and supports than were available to them.

Gesler-Werts, Wolery, Snyder, and Caldwell (1996b) conducted state and national surveys to determine the types of supports and conditions identified by teachers as the most important to inclusion. The researchers first conducted a state survey of general and special educators from Pennsylvania who were identified by public school principals as having prior inclusion experience. The questionnaire used open ended questions to prompt respondents to list three supports and resources and three problems or barriers associated with including students with disabilities in their classroom. Of the 175

questionnaires, 158 (90%) were returned usable and included general educators (81%) and special educators (19%).

The results of the state survey for general educators included 11 types of resources and supports, positive teacher attitudes, in class help, time, administrative support, team of professionals, peers and buddies, training, parental support, class size, money and resources, and community awareness. Twelve categories of problems/barriers were also identified and included lack of time, lack of training, insufficient knowledge, inability to understand needs, lack of in class supports, meeting of problem behavior, teacher attitudes, inadequate class size/structure, lack of parental support and poor social relationships. Using the results from the state survey, the researchers conducted a follow up study by having respondents rate how critical each 11 supports and 12 barriers were on a 5-point scale (1= very important or a significant problem, 5=unimportant or minor significance). The results of this follow up indicated that all of the supports except money/resources and community awareness had mean ratings of 4 or 5 and were considered by respondents as very important. Lack of time, training, and management of problem behavior were considered the most significant barriers to inclusion.

For the national survey, 2,100 surveys were sent and 1,430 (69.8%) were returned usable and included in the analysis. Similar to the state survey, respondents in the national survey were asked to list resources and supports and barriers critical to inclusion. In addition, teachers were asked to indicate if they had a child with a disability, the type of disability, if the child was enrolled full or part time, and they were asked to complete the ABILITIES Index described in previous studies (Wolery et al., 1995; Gessler-Werts et al., 1996). The respondents were general education teachers grades kindergarten to

six. Gessler-Werts et al. (1996) grouped participants into three categories students with no disability, students with suspected to moderate disabilities, and students with severe disabilities. Responding teachers listed a number of supports and resources critical to inclusion. The most frequently reported supports and resources were help from additional personnel, support from a team, sufficient training, family support, smaller class size, and administrative support. In comparing the differences between the groups, general education teachers who had a students with severe or profound disabilities were significantly more likely than the two groups of teachers to perceive lack of time, difficulty meeting the needs of children, inadequate class size, lack of team support, curriculum standards, and lack of understanding from other children as the most significant barriers and problems.

Gessler-Werts et al. (1996) raise a number of limitations that should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the extent that teachers would have continued to list other types of supports or barriers beyond the requested three is not known. Second, from the data available it cannot be determined which of the supports are considered most critical or how supports are specifically provided to teachers. For example, it is not known what administrators or other personnel did that was considered supportive. Neither are we able to determine what specific aspects of the barriers created problems for the responding teachers. In addition to these limitations, information is needed on how the teachers' perceived their inclusion experience (i.e., positive or negative) relative to interpreting and understanding their resource and support needs.

Support and needed resources may also be conceptualized as teacher incentives for facilitating inclusion. Pearman, Huang, and Mellblom (1997) investigated the

incentives and concerns of educators and administrators in inclusive general education settings. Using a survey developed by the researchers 558 participants in a mid sized Colorado school district were asked to participate. Of the distributed surveys, 246 were usable resulting in a 44% response rate. Of the respondents 45% were general education teachers, 31% were entitlement staff, 10% were administrators, and 15% were paraprofessional and related services staff. The survey contained three separate scales focusing on incentives, attitudes and perceptions, and concerns.

The findings from this study indicated that general education teachers were significantly more concerned with funding issues than other responding groups. Among the items in this subscale were funding for additional planning time for cooperative teaching, additional paraprofessional time for staff, and increased teacher staff. With regard to incentives, 46% of all respondents indicated financial rewards for teachers and schools were important, however, collectively respondents felt that training and funding issues were more important. This may or may not fully reflect the beliefs of general education teachers alone, as the researchers did not separate out their data from the rest of the participants in reporting this finding. For example, the researchers did report that general education teachers were significantly less likely than special education teachers to believe that training was important, and significantly more likely to believe that funding issues were important. Therefore, based on the reported findings in Pearman et al. (1997) additional research is needed to better understand what general education teachers perceive as incentives to inclusion.

With regard to staff concerns, no significant differences were reported for job position (e.g., special versus general education teachers). However, staff with more years

of experience had higher levels of concern than staff who were new to the field.

Concerns raised by all participants included a lack of time for planning and meetings, initial and ongoing training, lack of sufficient time to meet student needs, managing classrooms with diverse learners, and changing class standards.

Teachers in Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, and Scheer (1999) suggest that training and confidence may be two important supports needed to ensure successful inclusion. Using a likert-type scale, Buell et al. (1999) surveyed 202 general and 87 special education teachers in a mid-Atlantic state. The Likert-type scale addressed teacher confidence, inservice needs, and perceptions of necessary supports. The findings from this survey indicated that special education teachers were more likely to understand inclusion and have higher ratings of confidence that they would be able to teach difficult students than were general education teachers. General education teachers were significantly more likely than special educators were to express a need for training. General education teachers reported training was needed in program modifications, assessing academic progress, adapting curriculum, managing behavior, developing IEPs, and using assistive technology. For this group of responding general education teachers, they reported not having the necessary supports and resources needed to successfully include students with disabilities in their classrooms. Lack of training and other supports may explain why special education teachers were significantly more likely than general education teachers to have increased ratings of confidence for teaching difficult students. Among the supports and resources reported as being needed but not available were adequate class size, inservice training, and time to meet with families. General education

teachers did report that they had support from their administration and that they had opportunities to team with a specialist.

When interpreting the findings from Buell et al. (1999) it is important to consider that the respondents represent only one state and were not from a national sample. This is important because the philosophies, policies, and implementation practices for inclusion vary widely from state to state. Therefore the experiences these respondents had may produce findings that are substantially different from teachers in other parts of the country.

Summary. Research on teacher support and resource needs suggests that the extent to which support and resource needs are met may influence attitudes toward inclusion and teachers' perception of success and confidence with inclusion. Findings from these studies need to be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, although all studies produced information about the types of supports needed, it is not known why these supports were important for teachers and how they were best provided. Additionally, little is known about the unique characteristics of the inclusion situation, the students being included, or the school climate toward inclusion. These factors may substantially influence one's perception about the types of supports needed as well as the availability of those supports.

Second, Gessler-Werts et al. (1996a) grouped teachers by how they rated the severity of disability of students in their classrooms. However, they do not specify the number of teachers with students in each of the disability groups (i.e., normal to profound), but rather present aggregate data. A close inspection of their data reveals that the majority of teachers self rated as having students within the suspected to mild

disability groups, with fewer teachers self rating as having students in the moderate and severe groups. The implication is that the findings obtained may be more a reflection of the needs of teachers who have students with mild disabilities as opposed to the needs of teachers with students who have severe disabilities. Additional research is needed to determine the type and degree of supports needed for general education teachers of students with severe disabilities.

Third, all of the studies included both general and special education teachers and did not focus on one particular disability area. Because of this the extent that the findings accurately reflect the experiences and beliefs of general education teachers working with students with severe developmental disabilities is unclear. It is possible that the instruments used to capture the opinions of both general and special education teachers across multiple disability populations may have been designed differently if the exclusive focus was on general education teachers working with students with severe developmental disabilities. Had general education teachers of students with severe developmental disabilities alone been sampled different findings may have been obtained.

Fourth, none of the studies specifically addressed the needs of teachers supporting students engaging in challenging behavior. The extent that general education teachers of students with severe developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior are in need of more supports or different kinds of supports are currently unknown.

Positive Behavior Support

Many have argued that schools need to be restructured to encourage collaboration both within the school system and with the community (e.g., Lipsky & Gartner, 1987;

Sailor, 1996; Skrtic, 1991). One of the core objectives of the school restructuring effort is the emphasis on student-centered and individualized approaches to learning (Sailor, 1996). To achieve such an outcome, some have proposed inclusive educational arrangements where supports and services as a matter of design are embedded within the general education classroom (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Sailor, 1996). In 1997, the IDEA took a step toward such an approach by establishing the role of the general education teacher as an active participating member of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) process. Including the general education teacher in the IEP meeting establishes a foundation for collaborative planning to promote inclusive educational arrangements. Such requirements also suggest a change in the role of the general education teacher. Previously, general education teachers were not included in the planning process for students with significant disabilities. This most likely occurred because these students were often placed outside of the general education classroom. As more students with severe disabilities are included in the general class, general education teachers are finding their responsibilities evolving to include the design of specialized supports and services.

One of these new responsibilities may be participating in the design of a behavior support plan. Students who engage in problem behaviors in school settings pose great challenges for educators. Unwanted problem behaviors may disrupt day to day classroom routines and adversely affect learning for the focus student and their peers. In addition to impeding learning, the occurrence of problem behavior may affect how peers perceive students as well as their status as a member of the setting (e.g., Williams & Downing, 1998). The occurrence of problem behavior may also affect teachers' attitudes toward the student and inclusion (e.g., Cook et al., 2000; Cook, 2001). Because of the

risk for nonmembership and placement outside of the general education class, interventions are needed that will effectively support the student in inclusive settings.

Positive behavior support is one approach that might offer a framework for supporting students engaging in challenging behavior (Scotti, Ujcich, Weigle, Holland, & Kirk, 1996). Positive behavior support (PBS) is described as a values based approach to behavior interventions that relies both on the principles of applied behavior analysis and person centered philosophies. According to Sugai et al. (2000), PBS is the blending of behavioral science, practical interventions, social values, and team process. It is the unique interaction of these features that encourage the development of quality interventions for students engaging in difficult behaviors. PBS is premised on the belief that problem behaviors serve a function for the student that is often environmentally influenced.

Although the focus is on behavior intervention, PBS is considered a means to promote inclusion as an outcome for children and youth with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior (e.g., Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993; O'Neill, Williams, Sprague, Horner, & Albin, 1993; Sugai & Horner, 1994; Weigle, 1997). To achieve an inclusive outcome, PBS relies on a collaborative team process to promote the development of meaningful supports for the student (Anderson, Russo, Dunlap, & Albin, 1996). Team membership and participation must include the family, the general education teacher, and specialized personnel (e.g., special education teacher). Although much is known about the process of PBS, thus far, little is known about how teams work together to implement PBS in school settings.

Generally, PBS occurs in two stages. First, a functional behavior assessment (FBA) is conducted. FBA refers to the process of gathering information about the student, the behavior, antecedents, and consequences maintaining occurrences of behavior in order to develop a student centered hypothesis of why behavior occurs (Knoster, 2000). To conduct a FBA a variety of assessment strategies (e.g., interviews and observations) are used to identify functional relationships between environmental variables and problem behaviors (Demchack & Bossert, 1996; Lennox & Miltenberger, 1989; O'Neill et al., 1997; Tobin, 1994). The information collected through the assessment is then summarized into hypothesis statements explaining behavioral function that are used to guide the development of behavior support plans.

The second step involves using the information gathered during the assessment to develop a comprehensive behavior support plan. The intervention plan describes supports, strategies, and instruction all tailored to meet the unique needs of the student based on the explanation of behavioral function and contributing environmental influences. Comprehensive behavior support plans generally contain at least three essential elements, environmental interventions, alternative skill training, and effective strategies to respond to occurrences of behavior (Albin, O'Neill, & Sprague, 1989; Bambara, Mitchell-Kvacky, & Iacobelli, 1994; Bambara & Knoster, 1998; Carr & Carlson, 1993; Meyer & Evans, 1989).

Environmental interventions refer to both immediate antecedent interventions as well as lifestyle enhancement interventions. Immediate antecedent interventions are designed to either prevent problem behavior from occurring, neutralize the occurrence of an antecedent event, or promote the occurrence of desired skills (e.g., Bambara, Koger,

Katzer, & Davenport, 1995; Dunlap, DePerczel, Calrke, Wilson, Wriath, White, & Gomez, 1994; Dyer, Dunlap, & Winterling, 1990; Foster-Johnson, Ferro, & Dunlap, 1994; Haring & Kennedy, 1990; Horner, Day, & Day, 1997; Kennedy, 1994; Koegel, Dyer, & Bell, 1987). Antecedent interventions are useful because they are a powerful way to modify the environment and create opportunities for students to learn and use more appropriate skills alternative to the problem behavior. Interventions designed to promote lifestyle enhancement focus on building the quality of the student's life through opportunities for school and community inclusion.

Once environmental interventions are in place, the teacher can then introduce learning opportunities that encourage the student to use more socially appropriate skills alternative to the problem behavior (e.g., Carr et al., 1999; Doss & Reichle, 1989; Durand, 1990; Durand & Carr, 1991; Horner, Sprague, O'Brien, & Heathfield, 1990; Horner & Day, 1991). One reason for teaching alternative skills is to replace the problem behaviors with socially appropriate alternative means for addressing the same function of behavior. A second reason is to provide the student with alternative skills that reduce the need for problem behaviors by providing outcomes that effectively compete with the function of behavior (e.g., teaching play skills to eliminate self-stimulatory behavior).

The third essential component to the intervention plan is strategies to effectively respond to both the occurrence of desired and undesired behaviors. Typically, strategies designed to respond to undesired behavior are aimed at eliminating the reinforcement associated with and maintaining problem behavior (e.g., planned ignoring, differential reinforcement) (e.g., Carr, Levin, Mconnachie, Carlson, Kemp, & Smith, 1994; Lerman, Iwata, & Wallace, 1999; Meyer & Evans, 1989). In addition to planned consequences,

these strategies also incorporate the use of natural or typical consequences that are age and setting appropriate. Equally important is responding effectively to occurrences of desired or appropriate behavior. Regular and consistent reinforcement may be needed as a student acquires a new skill (Snell & Brown, 2000). Some students may also benefit from reinforcement based monitoring programs such as self-monitoring combined with token reinforcement.

Within the general education setting, positive behavior support may be one viable means to promoting successful inclusion for students who engage in challenging behaviors. Participation in the design and implementation of a behavior support plan is considered an essential competency of professionals working with students who engage in difficult behaviors (Dunlap, Heineman, Knoster, Fox, Anderson, Albin, 2000). Traditionally, general education teachers have not been a part of the development or implementation of behavior support plans. The most likely reason is because students needing this type of intervention were often placed in special education classrooms. However, more recently, general education teachers are an active part of this process as a result of students being included in their classrooms. Unfortunately, there is no research that provides guidance or examples of what participation means, how teachers are participating, or what it means to them to take part in individualized support for students with severe developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior.

Summary of Need

A strong empirical base supports the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in general education settings. Among the potential benefits offered by the inclusive environment are increased social opportunities, membership and belonging, and

IEPs reflective of current best practice. Although there may be initial hesitation to include a student with severe disabilities, general education teachers tend to hold positive attitudes toward inclusion. Initial hesitations may be a function of feelings of uncertainty and not being prepared (e.g., Janney et al., 1995a/b). However, over time, general education teachers may feel more confident once they have the first hand opportunity to include the student (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1995a/b). One important feature of successful inclusion experiences for general education teachers is the extent that the teachers believe they are receiving supports needed. The specific types of supports needed may vary depending on the unique circumstances of the inclusion situation (e.g., teacher, student, building culture). Providing general education teachers with respect for their professional autonomy and decision making capability is one example of a support needed by teachers (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993). In another example, general education teachers discussed the need for opportunities to plan for inclusion (e.g., Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999).

Another variable that may impact the success of inclusion is the extent that the student engages in behaviors considered problematic by the teacher and peers. Students with developmental disabilities may be more likely to engage in behavior considered unacceptable by peers and teachers (McDonnell, et al., 1997). As a result, students with developmental disabilities who engage in such behavioral challenges may be at risk for nonmembership or even placement outside of the general education classroom. General education peers in Peck et al. (1990), Williams and Downing (1998), and Fisher et al. (1998) discussed disruptive behaviors as reason why nonmembership could occur. General education teacher attitudes toward inclusion may also be affected by challenging

behaviors (Cook et al., 2000; Cook, 2001; Soodak et al., 1998). Because challenging behavior may impede the academic progress of the student with disabilities as well as other students in the classroom, general education teachers may need to be equipped with special skills and supports that enable them to effectively manage the inclusion classroom. Based on current best practices, in inclusion and behavioral support, these special skills may include an understanding of how to conduct functional behavioral assessments, develop multicomponent intervention plans, implement interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of those plans.

Students engaging in problem behaviors may pose unique challenges to the inclusion process. The extent that teachers serving this population of students need supports that are different from or in addition to those described in the literature thus far is unknown. Published literature in the area of inclusion provides numerous examples of successful inclusion experiences, however, none has focused on students who also engage in problem behaviors. In particular, the experiences, perspectives, and needs of general education teachers who are including students with severe disabilities who engage in challenging behavior in their classroom is relatively unknown. In order to promote the success of students engaging in problem behaviors in inclusive environments, we must understand the perspectives and support needs of general education teachers responsible for managing classrooms with diverse learners.

Chapter 3

Methods

The current study was designed to describe general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the essential supports needed to successfully include a student with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior in general education classrooms. Rooted in a phenomenological approach to inquiry, I used semi-structured interviews to gather information about the participants' experiences including students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior using positive behavior intervention practices. Qualitative designs that use interviewing as the primary method of data collection seek to understand the participant's experiences and the meaning or sense they make of those experiences (Seidman, 1991). By posing open ended questions and then exploring teacher responses, interviewing allowed me to explore the participant's subjective understanding and meaning they attached to their experience (Seidman, 1991). Through the interview process, the participants were asked to provide information about themselves in relationship to the topic under study, reconstruct their experiences, and then explore the intellectual and emotional connections they attached to their attitudes and beliefs (Seidman, 1991).

Researcher Bias and Presuppositions

In phenomenological inquiry, the researcher must understand the concept of epoche (Creswell, 1998). Epoche is when the researcher brackets his or her presuppositions and biases so that the phenomena can be understood from the participants' perspective. In the current study, I acknowledged the following presuppositions:

1. General education teachers would have received support from a special education teacher and special services staff/education consultants to develop and implement intervention strategies.
2. General education teachers would have perceived their experience as successful because they were able to include the student in their class.
3. General education teachers would have been frustrated by systems level barriers such as lack of administrative support and limited resources.
4. General education teachers who felt satisfied with the experience likely had frequent and positive contact with the child's parent.
5. General education teachers would have used an informal problem solving approach to behavior support that was characterized by frequent discussions with other members of the child's educational team and implementation of various types of intervention strategies.

To ensure that these presuppositions did not bias data analysis, I took the following steps:

1. All biases were recorded in memo form.
2. Prior to each interview, I reviewed the biases to ensure that my personal beliefs did not interfere with interviewing.
3. Each time I analyzed data, the biases were reviewed to ensure that data analysis was not guided by my presuppositions.
4. When identified themes were consistent with my presuppositions I looked for evidence to support the theme.

Participants and Setting

A total of 14 public school teachers participated in the study. To select participants who had experienced a common phenomenon, purposeful sampling procedures were employed. Purposeful sampling refers to a process of deliberately selecting participants who can provide important information about the topic of study (Maxwell, 1996). Participants selected were perceived by nominators (see recruitment section) to have experienced some measure of success (Bogdan & Taylor, 1990). The intention behind using success as a criterion was to identify cases where the most information about what it takes to make inclusion work could be learned (Patton, 1990). In this study, target participants were general education teachers who had a successful inclusion experience with a student who had a history of engaging in challenging behaviors. Through careful selection, it was possible to detail the uniqueness of each situation within the context of the experience they had (Creswell, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To adequately capture a common experience across participants the following criteria were used for inclusion in the study:

1. A public school district employed the participants as full time general education teachers at the elementary school level in either Pennsylvania or New Jersey with at least one full school year of teaching experience. The exception was Dawn, whose general education teaching experience occurred on a United States military base in Asia.
2. Participants had a student in their general education class who (a) was identified as having a developmental disability (e.g., mental retardation, Autism, Asperger

Syndrome, Down Syndrome), (b) received special education, and (c) had a history of engaging in challenging behaviors. Challenging behavior referred to patterns of chronic overt verbal and physical actions exhibited by a student that (a) were considered to be disruptive to the student's own learning or the learning of other students, (b) posed a safety risk to the student or others, or (c) disrupted or interfered with established classroom or nonclassroom area routines, and required individualized behavior support strategies. I attempted to recruit participants who had included students with severe developmental disabilities, however I was unable to find anyone who met this criteria. As a result, this criteria was broadened to students with moderate developmental disabilities.

3. The behavior intervention strategies used were positive practices that were consistent with positive behavior support such as:
 - a. Conducted a functional assessment; or
 - b. Developed hypothesis or explanatory statements describing the environmental influences and function of behavior; or
 - c. Designed interventions strategies that prevented behavior from occurring; or
 - d. Taught alternative skills to replace the behavior; or
 - e. Designed intervention strategies that aimed to improve the quality of the student's school day using positive practices (e.g., fostering friendships)

Initially, I tried to recruit participants who had experience with positive behavior support, however, I was unable to find teachers who met this criterion. Therefore, this criterion was subsequently modified to recruit teachers who used positive practices that were consistent with positive behavior support.

4. The participant was responsible for the daily implementation of the behavior support strategies.
5. The participant had been involved with the student for at least four months.
6. The inclusion situation was reported as a success, with at least two of the following student outcomes being reported during the screening:
 - a. Consistent or increasing amounts of time being spent in general education classrooms;
 - b. Improvement noted in academic performance or daily functioning;
 - c. Maintenance or increases in the student's positive social interaction with peers;
 - d. Decreases in the frequency and or intensity of challenging behavior.
7. Participants included the focus student in their classroom at least one full class period per school day.

Teacher Student Profiles

Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide demographic information for each of the teachers (Table 1), their school buildings (Table 2), and focus students (Table 3)¹. Participating teachers ranged in age from 26 to 57 years (average 45 years). Teachers taught in general education an average of 18 years with a range of 2 to 37 years. Six teachers held Master's degrees and five teachers had graduate credits beyond a Bachelor's but not enough for a Master's degree. Three teachers taught first grade, three teachers taught second grade, five teachers taught third grade, two teachers taught fourth grade, and one teacher taught sixth grade. One teacher was African American; the rest were Caucasian. Four of the teachers were also certified in special education.

¹ The names of teachers, schools, and focus children have been change to protect confidentiality.

Table 1.

Participant demographics at the time of the inclusion experience.

Participant	Age	Years	Years	Other	Highest Degree	Race
(Grade Taught)		Teaching Total	Teaching in General Education	Certification Areas	Earned	
Leslie (3 rd Grade)	57	26	26	Autistic Support	Masters plus 42	Caucasian
Ernie (3 rd Grade)	57	30	30	Special Education	Bachelors Plus 9	Caucasian
Laurie (1 st Grade)	29	2	2	None	Masters	Caucasian
Debbie (2 nd Grade)	54	20	16	None	Bachelors plus 15	Caucasian
Alice (3 rd Grade)	61	37	29	None	Bachelors	Caucasian

Participant (Grade)	Age	Years Teaching Total	Years Teaching General Education	Other Certification Areas	Highest Degree Earned	Race
Leigh (4 th Grade)	52	29	29	None	Bachelors plus 12 credits	Caucasian
Peter (6 th Grade)	52	29	29	Special Education & Administration	Masters Plus 42	Caucasian
Penny (2 nd Grade)	47	23	23	Early Childhood	Bachelors Plus 3	Caucasian
Beatrice (3 rd Grade)	54	32	32	None	Bachelors	Caucasian
Melinda (3 rd Grade)	31	8	3	Special Education & Administration	Masters	Caucasian

Participant (Grade)	Age	Years Teaching Total	Years Teaching General Education	Other Certification Areas	Highest Degree Earned	Race
Jillian (1 st Grade)	26	5	5	None	Bachelors	Caucasian
Mary (2/3 rd Grade)	26	4	4	None	Bachelors Plus 21	Caucasian
LeAnn (1 st Grade)	41	15	15	None	Masters	African American
Desiree (4 th Grade)		7	3	Special Education	Masters	Caucasian

Table 2.

School district demographics for the school year the focus student was included

School Building (Teacher)	Student Population	Students in Respective Grade	Average Number Per Class	Student to Faculty Ratio	Students with IEP (Total for School)	Language Diversity
Lincoln Elementary School Grades K-8						
Debbie	137	17	15	9:1	16%	English 99% Other 1%
Alice	139	16	15	8:1		LEP 1%
Jackson Elementary School Grades K-3						
Leslie	535	155	25	Data not available	9%	English 99% Spanish 1%

School Building (Teacher)	Student Population	Students in Respective Grade	Average Number Per Class	Student to Faculty Ratio	Students with IEP (Total for School)	Language Diversity
Eisenhower Elementary School Grades K-4						
Laurie	541	99	20.4	14.:1	14%	English 80% Spanish 8% Gujarati 5%
Ernie	541	109	20.4	14:1	14%	Others 7% LEP 7%
Adams Elementary School Grades 3-5						
Melinda	588	188	20.6	13:1	12%	English 17% Other: 83% LEP 1%

School Building (Teacher)	Student Population	Students in Respective Grade	Average Number Per Class	Student to Faculty Ratio	Students with IEP (Total for School)	Language Diversity
Polk Elementary School Grades K-5						
Mary	377	139	19.2	12: 1	14%	English 94% Spanish 6% LEP 6%
Ford Elementary School Grades K-5						
LeAnn	525	104	22.2	15:1	7%	English 39% Spanish 49% Other 12% LEP 7%
Johnson Elementary School Grades K-5						
Desiree	706	102	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available

School Building (Teacher)	Student Population	Students in Respective Grade	Average Number Per Class	Student to Faculty Ratio	Students with IEP (Total for School)	Language Diversity
Roosevelt Elementary School - Grades K-6						
Leigh	334	50	20.6	11.3:1		
Peter	334	37	20.6	11.3:1		
					13%	English 99%
Penny	331	39	20.1	12.3:1		Spanish 1%
Jillian	334	54	20.1	12.3:1		
Barbara	331	48	20.1	12.3:1		

Table 3.

Focus student demographics

Student and Grade	Disability	Behaviors of Concern
Denny 3 rd Grade (Leslie)	Autism	Crying and screaming; loud vocalizations; stomping feet ; refusing to do school work
Tommy 1 st Grade (Laurie)	Autism	Inappropriate comments; refusing to do school work; tantrums that included crying and yelling
Adam 3 rd Grade (Ernie)	Asperger Syndrome	Refusing to do school work; self hitting and head banging
James 6 th Grade (Peter)	Down Syndrome	Refusing to do school work; throwing things
Kenny 2 nd Grade (Debbie) 3 rd Grade (Alice)	Down Syndrome	Leaving area; refusing to do school work; spitting and biting

Student and Grade	Disability	Behaviors of Concern
Timmy 3 rd Grade (Beatrice) 4 th Grade (Leigh)	Autism	Throwing objects; spitting and biting; refusing to do school work
Manny 2 nd Grade (Penny)	Hydrocephaly Seizure Disorder Vision Problems	Aggression toward students; pushing students forcefully; throwing things
Armand 3 rd Grade (Melinda)	Autism	Crying and outbursts; refusing to do school work
Billy 1 st Grade (LeAnn)	Autism	Inappropriate social words and actions; refusing to do school work or requests; run around the classroom
Philip 1 st Grade (Jillian)	Asperger Syndrome	Throwing objects and furniture; hitting other students; threatening other students; running away; scratching himself; inappropriate social words and actions

Student and Grade	Disability	Behaviors of Concern
John	Pervasive	Refusing to do school work ; refusing adult requests; hitting others;
2 nd Grade (Mary)	Developmental Disorder - NOS Oppositional Defiant Disorder	threatening to throw objects; inappropriate social words and actions
David	Cognitive Impairments	Hitting; spitting; biting; throwing objects; refusal to do school work
4 th Grade (Desiree)	Partial deafness Autistic like features	

Participating teachers were from eight different elementary schools from different regions of New Jersey, with two exceptions. One teacher was from a school in Northeast Pennsylvania while another teacher (Desiree) had her inclusion experience teaching in a public school on a military base in Asia. School districts located on United States military bases fall under the auspice of the Department of Defense and are referred to as Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS). Schools located on a military base are considered a self standing school district and are often quite large. This particular district had 8 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 2 high schools.

The elementary schools ranged in size from 137 to 706 students with an average of 486 students. Class sizes ranged from 15 to 25 students with an average of 19 students per class. In terms of language diversity, schools were predominantly English speaking with the exception of Ford Elementary School in which 61% of the student population spoke a first language other than English. Three schools (Lincoln, Jackson, and Roosevelt) were in rural areas, two schools (Polk and Ford) were in urban areas, and two schools (Adams and Eisenhower) were in suburban areas.

A total of 12 students were the focus of the inclusion experience. Two teachers at Roosevelt (Beatrice and Leigh) both had experience with Timmy, but during different school years and two teachers from Lincoln (Debbie and Alice) both had experience with Kenny, but during different school years. All but two students (Billy and Timmy) were included full time in the general education classroom. Billy and Timmy received half a day support within a resource room setting. Eight students were diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorders (i.e., Autism, Asperger, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder), two students (James and Kenny) with Down Syndrome, and two students (Manny and David)

were diagnosed with varying exceptionalities (e.g., Hydrocephaly, cognitive impairments). All students were working on their grade level curriculum with adaptations and modifications. All students also received instruction on functional life skills ranging in frequency from twice a week (two students) to daily (10 students). Common behavioral challenges included refusal to do school work, various types of aggression (e.g., hitting and biting), and inappropriate words and actions (See Table 3 for more complete description of behavioral challenges).

Recruitment Process

To identify teachers, professionals affiliated with districts, intermediate units, and regional department of education training centers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania were contacted. The professional roles of these individuals were district level directors of special services, special education supervisors, educational consultants, department of education employees, the Executive Director of the NJ Coalition for Inclusion, or state trainers. Because of the supervisory and consultant nature of these positions, these professionals had a broad familiarity with specific situations that involved the inclusion of a student with disabilities engaging in challenging behavior. Professionals from New Jersey and Pennsylvania were initially selected because of State Department of Education outreach initiatives to train school-based teams on positive behavior support during the past several years.

I provided nominators with a description of the study and criteria for inclusion and then asked for nominees. Potential participants were contacted in two ways. Some nominators preferred to speak with the teacher themselves. In these situations, the nominator was provided with a copy of a general letter requesting participation

(Appendix A), a copy of the study description (Appendix B), and a copy of the consent form (Appendix C). In situations where the nominator provided a name directly, the teacher was mailed a general letter requesting participation, a copy of the study description, and a copy of the consent form.

Interested teachers were directed to contact me either by phone or by email. Once I was contacted, an initial telephone screening took place. During the telephone screening, I provided a verbal explanation of the study and asked if the teacher had any questions they would like to ask. Additionally, I gathered initial information using the participant criteria previously described to ensure that the teacher and the inclusion situation were appropriate for the study. Teachers that met criteria for the study and expressed an interest in being a participant were asked to sign an informed consent form giving permission for me to formally interview them. When consent was obtained I set up a time and date for the first interview.

Over a 16 month period, 54 teachers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania were invited to participate. Of the 54, 14 responded and were subsequently included in the study and 2 responded who did not meet the criteria. Attempts had been made to recruit participants in Pennsylvania through intermediate units and principal contacts. Two teachers were nominated, one did not meet the study criteria the other was subsequently included in the study. Contacts in Pennsylvania were not productive therefore efforts were focused on recruiting participants in New Jersey.

To determine whether sufficient data were collected and recruitment efforts could stop, I developed criteria to determine whether data saturation had occurred with the 14 participants. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) data saturation occurs when the

information obtained from new participants becomes redundant and continued data collection results in diminishing returns. To make decisions about data saturation, data analyzed from the last three participants (i.e., Mary, Desiree, and LeAnn) was compared to the analyzed data from the other 11 participants. Data from the last three participants fit within the existing domain and category structure and added no new information. Based on this information, I decided that data collection was sufficient and reached a point of saturation.

Data Source

To gather data, participants engaged in a series of three separate interviews (Seidman, 1991). Seidman (1991) recommends a series of three separate interviews so that the researcher can understand the participant's perspective through prolonged engagement. By prolonging engagement through the interview series, the respondent builds trust in the interviewer allowing them to feel more comfortable sharing personal information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ongoing interview process provided an opportunity to gather in-depth information as well as provided a forum for checking the consistency of information over time. Prolonged engagement may increase the probability that credible findings (i.e., the extent that the data presented is worthy of the reader's confidence and belief) were produced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

During Interview 1, Seidman (1991) suggests having participants describe their early experiences leading up to how they arrived in the current situation (Seidman, 1991). Therefore, in this study, Interview 1 served the purpose of gathering information about the participants' educational background, teaching experience, teaching philosophy and management style, perspectives about problem behavior, and familiarity with providing

special education services. By gathering this information, I could more fully understand the participants' perspectives and beliefs that guided their teaching practices prior to their inclusion experience. Information about the teacher's background experiences and education also facilitated an understanding of how prepared they were for the inclusion experience. On average, Interview 1 lasted 40 minutes (range of 30-75 minutes) with transcript lengths ranging from 15 to 38 (average 20 one and a half spaced pages) pages.

During Interview 2, Seidman (1991) recommends having the participant reconstruct their experience concentrating on detailed descriptions and illustrative examples. In this study, Interview 2 served the purposes of having participants describe (a) their experiences related to how the inclusion situation came about; (b) their initial perceptions of the student; (c) the types of behavioral challenges they experienced; (d) how they were involved in the development of the intervention plan; (e) the specific types of teacher supports they received and how those supports were provided; and (f) the types of struggles they faced, and how they resolved those struggles. Interview 2 was substantive in that participants were asked to concretely describe their day to day experiences teaching the focus student engaging in challenging behavior in their class. Through Interview 2, I was able to understand from the participants' perspectives the day to day mechanics of designing and implementing interventions to support the student, how they dealt with difficult times, and the types of supports or resources the teachers needed to make it work. On average Interview 2 lasted 60 minutes (range of 30-80 minutes) with transcript lengths ranging from 11 to 40 pages (average of 29 one and half spaced pages).

During Interview 3, Seidman (1991) recommends having the participants reflect on the meaning of their experiences with the phenomena of interest. According to Seidman (1991) the concrete details of Interviews 1 and 2 provided the context for the participant to explore their understanding. In this study, Interview 3 had participants reflect on their inclusion experience by commenting on (a) how supports provided to them were critical to their success; (b) if their successful experience changed their perceptions of including students who engaged in challenging behavior; and (c) lessons learned from the experience. On average Interview 3 lasted 35 minutes (range of 20-50 minutes) with transcript lengths ranging from 10 to 26 pages (average of 15 one and a half spaced pages).

To gather information during the interviews, three separate semi-structured interview guides were used, one for each interview (Appendix D). The interview guides focused the interviews on key topics and ensured consistency across participants (Seidman, 1991). Development of the interview guides stemmed from a review of the literature on inclusion and positive behavior support and my professional experiences. To ensure the interview questions were clear and easy to respond to, pilot questions were field tested with a general education teacher with inclusion experience. Based on her feedback, minor wording changes to the questions were made. The interview guides used open-ended questions to provide participants with the opportunity to provide as much description about the phenomena as possible. To ensure a thorough gathering of information, I also encouraged the participants to expand on their comments when relevant. To do this, I listened carefully to the participants' comments for both content and meaning and followed up with questions that asked for clarification, solicited more

detail, or requested examples of stories (Seidman, 1991). During the interviews, I refrained from making both verbal and nonverbal signals that could inadvertently reinforce the participants' responses (e.g., "yes", "very interesting"). However, head nods and affirmations to continue (e.g., "go on" "tell me more about that") were used. During data analysis, the interview questions were continually evaluated to ensure that they (a) continued to stimulate relevant responses and (b) were producing information that answered the research questions. As data were analyzed interview questions were modified slightly to chase newly emerging topics and to clarify and improve wording. The final set of interview questions is presented in Appendix E.

All interviews were conducted by me and took place at the respondent's school either in the teacher's classroom or a private room. All interviews were tape-recorded and as a precaution, I kept a second tape recorder with me at all of the interviews. Generally, interviews occurred between 5 to 10 school days apart. For three participants a one month interval occurred between Interviews 2 and 3 due to holidays, unscheduled snow days and illness.

Data Management

Data preparation. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber whose sole business was providing transcription services. To ensure that the transcriber understood the procedures, I met with her in person and reviewed the transcription procedures described in Bogdon and Biklen (1992). These procedures included (a) a heading at the start of each interview, (b) starting a new line each time a new person speaks, (c) breaking long responses into manageable paragraphs, d) numbering each line of the transcript, and (e) reading the transcript while listening to the

tape to ensure accurate transcription. I read all transcripts while simultaneously listening to the audiotape to ensure that they had been transcribed accurately.

Data storage and retrieval. All transcripts were stored in a locked cabinet in my office. Initially, I proposed using the NUDIST software program to manage data. However, once the study began I found it more comfortable to use traditional cut and sort methods. To manage data in this way, coded transcripts were photocopied and then cut into coded sections and then maintained in a file designated for each participant.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing and conducted in conjunction with data collection. The following outlines the major components of the analysis process. However, the process was not linear. Meaning that the components were applied to sets of transcripts at a time and then repeated each time new data was collected.

Domain and category development. To develop categories, I read and labeled each line of text in the first participant's transcript. Next, I performed the same steps for participants two and three. Then the categories for all three participants were reviewed to look for consistency, redundancy, and overlap while keeping the overall research questions in mind. This process resulted in the development of an initial structure consisting of eight domain areas and 32 categories within the domains. The initial list of domains and categories were then applied to subsequent transcripts and continually revised based on new information learned (Bambara, Gomez, Koger, Lohrmann-O'Rourke, & Ping-Xin, 2002; Hill, Thompson, & Nutt-Williams, 1997). By the 11th participant a steady list of domains and categories had been developed and defined. Table

Table 4.

Domains and categories and their frequency of occurrence across participants. Domains are in bold categories are in italics.

<i>Domain and Category Structure</i>	<i>Response Frequency</i>
Building culture toward inclusion	14
Personal beliefs about classroom management and inclusion	14
<i>Strengths based</i>	13
<i>Establishing consistent expectations</i>	13
<i>Building rapport and relationships</i>	12
<i>Encouraging student empowerment</i>	8
Degree and type of exposure to challenging behavior	14
<i>Prior teaching and training</i>	14
<i>Student reputations and teacher stories</i>	12
Types of initial impressions formed	14
<i>Initial apprehensions</i>	10
<i>Feeling confident</i>	4
Social Context of Support	14
<i>Administrative Posture</i>	11
<i>Acceptance and practice of inclusion</i>	12
<i>Collegial atmosphere</i>	13
<i>In class supports</i>	14

<i>Domain and Category Structure</i>	<i>Response Frequency</i>
The Emergence of Struggles	14
<i>Student centered struggles</i>	13
<i>Conflicts with parents</i>	11
<i>Conflicts with professionals</i>	8
Situational Supports for the Teacher	14
<i>Interpersonal supports</i>	12
<i>Collaboration opportunities</i>	13
<i>Administrative support</i>	10
<i>Parent support</i>	4
<i>Awareness building activities</i>	9
Interventions to Address Challenging Behaviors	14
<i>Design responsibility</i>	14
<i>Core beliefs</i>	14
<i>The ways interventions were designed</i>	14
<i>Strategies to prevent problem behavior</i>	14
<i>Strategies to build relationships</i>	13
<i>Strategies to respond to behavior</i>	14
<i>Skills taught to help the student be more appropriate</i>	7
Changes in Attitudes and Beliefs	14
<i>Changing perspectives about inclusion</i>	13
<i>Learning and growing as a professional</i>	14

4 presents the final domains and categories and the frequency of domains and categories occurring across participants.

Individual summaries. Once the transcript had been coded, the next step was to develop an individual summary that abstracted the respondent's comments within domains and categories (Bambara et al., 2002; Hill et al., 1997). Abstracting core ideas provided a method to begin categorizing and reducing data for each participant in preparation for the cross analysis. Additionally, the individual summaries provided a format for the researcher to begin making initial interpretations about meaning. Each domain area was labeled (e.g., Personal Beliefs) and included an abstract that summarized and interpreted meaning for each of the categories within that domain. To the greatest extent possible, abstracts were constructed using actual participant language. Respondent quotations with specific citations from the original transcript accompanied each domain/category abstract. While creating the individual summary, I returned to the original transcript and re-read the entire interview so that comments were not taken out of context and to ensure that the essence of what the respondent was saying was captured. Additionally, I re-read written memos and reflected on recorded biases. To maintain a data trail, all individual summaries contained specific numeric citations for each unit of text so that comments could be tracked back to the original interview.

Cross analysis. Once individual summaries were developed, the next step was to conduct a cross analysis across all participants' individual summaries. The cross analysis was characterized by a dynamic and reflective process where new data continually

informed previously analyzed data and the structure of the emerging conceptualization. Cross analysis was conducted into two stages. First, a constant comparative method of analysis was used to look for similarities and differences across participants. In the second stage, these similarities and differences were contextualized to interpret meaning. The constant comparative stage of analysis began after the transcripts for the first four participants (Laurie, Leslie, Ernie, and Debbie) were coded and individual summaries developed. A cross analysis document was developed using the same procedures described above for constructing an individual summary except that data analysis occurred across participants (Bambara et al., 2002; Hill et al., 1997). To develop the cross analysis document, sets of three to four individual summaries were analyzed at a time. The cross analysis document contained detailed narrative descriptions of each domain and category (e.g., encouraging empowerment within the personal belief domain) and contained numeric citations for each piece of data described in the text. With each additional set of individualize summaries, categories were modified, if needed, to capture new meaning. When this occurred, I returned to the original transcripts for all participants and looked for evidence of the modified category and recoded transcripts when necessary. As new data were acquired and analyzed it was compared to and incorporated into the existing cross analysis.

The second stage of cross analysis occurred after all of the individual summaries had been analyzed and incorporated into the cross analysis document. The second stage of cross analysis involved contextualizing the data to form a descriptive storyline of the participants' experiences. More than just sorting data by similarity, contextualizing was the process of linking data to identify relationships among the different core ideas offered

by respondents. To do this, the researcher looked for patterns or themes that emerged across respondents' interviews and then provided rich descriptions of the meanings of those themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Contextualization of the data is process oriented and results directly from the data (Hill et al., 1997). However, it was at this stage in the analysis that I began to move beyond data to interpret meaning.

Member Checks. One method to strengthen the credibility and thus trustworthiness of the findings is to conduct member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking in this study entailed gathering feedback from participants regarding the accuracy of meaning or interpretation I constructed. A three phase member check process was used.

In the first phase, participants were asked to comment on the extent that the information described in their individual summary accurately reflected the information they provided during the interviews. Member checks were conducted through the mail. Each participants received a letter asking them to complete the member check (Appendix F), copy of the individual summary previously described, with areas designated for them to make comments, and directions for completing the member check. Member check summaries ranged from 6 to 14 pages of single spaced text with an average of 9 pages. In the left hand column next to each abstract was a box that provided a place for respondents to check "Agree," "Disagree," or "Comments on Back." The back side of each page of the member check contained lines allowing participants to more easily make comments if they wished. Appendix G provides a sample of a member check.

Participants were asked to return their comments using a self-addressed stamped envelope to me within 2 weeks of receiving of the report. When feedback was not

received within four weeks I sent a second mailing with a revised letter prompting them to complete and return the member check. Subsequently, all member checks were returned following the second mailing. In terms of agreement patterns, all participants agreed with the summaries sent with no participants having a dissenting opinion. In one situation, a participant asked to have two quotes removed from her summary.

In the second phase participants were asked to listen to a presentation of the findings and comment on whether the cross analysis aggregating all of the teachers' experiences was representative of their personal experience and to solicit further feedback and comments from participants about the interpretations of meaning I made. To do this, all participants received a letter (Appendix H) inviting them to attend a focus group meeting at a geographically central location. The letter included information about the focus group, its importance, and an invitation to dinner immediately following the meeting. Four participants attended the focus group meeting. They all agreed with the findings presented and did not add any new information to the interpretation of findings.

In the third phase, participants were asked to comment on a written summary of the study findings. The purpose of this phase of the member check was for participants to reflect and comment on whether the aggregate findings "rang true" to their experience. The third phases of the member check was conducted by mail using the same procedures described for phase one (individual member checks) (See Appendix I). Each participant received a final summary (Appendix J) that was 11 one and a half spaced pages in length. Participants were asked to return their comments using a self addressed stamped envelope to me within 2 weeks of receiving of the report. Within four weeks, all member checks were returned with no participants dissenting from the findings described.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to trustworthiness or credibility in the findings. To enhance the trustworthiness in this study four factors were considered during data collection and analysis. These were truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Truth value or credibility, refers to the extent that the findings described accurately reflected the participant's reality. Fundamentally, the data gathered must correspond with what the participants' said during their interviews. In this study, the primary threat to the credibility of the findings was missed or misinterpreted construction of meaning. Prolonged engagement was used in two ways to control this threat. First, the nature of the three-series interview provided me with the opportunity to repeatedly check for distortions (e.g., misinformation or conflicting information) that might have occurred in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, participants had multiple opportunities to critique findings throughout the data analysis phase of the study using the member check process previously described. Peer debriefing was another strategy that was used to control for credibility threats. Peer debriefing was the process of presenting data to a person objective to the study for the purpose of critiquing emerging meaning. The role of the peer debriefer was to play devil's advocate by asking questions that helped to clarify next methodological steps, question preliminary analysis and hypothesis formation, offer contrary opinion, and point out potentially superficial description. In doing this, I could be more confident that I was not missing or misinterpreting meaning. In this study the dissertation chair (Linda Bambara) served as the peer debriefer. Since no set procedure for how to conduct peer debriefing exists in the published literature, the following procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used:

1. The debriefer and I met 4 times during the course of the study (12/16/02; 4/23/03; 9/12/03; 10/31/03).
2. When appropriate and necessary, I forwarded written examples and summaries to the peer debriefer prior to the meeting so that sufficient time was allotted to prepare for the meeting adequately. This also allowed the debriefer to carefully think about the emerging findings and was then in a better position to offer critique.
3. During the debriefing, I presented a summary of the methodological steps taken and the emerging research findings, highlighting key themes and patterns.
4. At the end of the debriefing session I documented the session in writing.
5. Following the debriefing session, I carefully reviewed the debriefing notes and considered ways of resolving critique addressed by the debriefer.

With regard to applicability, my responsibility was to provide a rich enough description of the findings to allow the reader to make judgments about potential transferability to similar teachers and settings. Superficial description and failure to generate meaning were both potential threats to transferability in this study. The three-phase interview process and the three-phase member check process both enhanced the likelihood that sufficient information was obtained, thus allowing for a rich description of the participants' experiences. A second way these threats were controlled for was through the participant selection process. By interviewing participants until a point of data saturation was reached enhanced the likelihood of providing a rich or thick description of the data. In the current study, the repetition of themes began to occur after interviewing the 7th participant, and by the 11th participant, no new information was provided by participants that would change or alter the conceptual structure of the

findings previously analyzed. To ensure that the researcher was not missing or misinterpreting meaning, the peer debriefing process previously described was also used to control for threats against applicability.

The third factor considered was the extent that the data and subsequent findings were consistent or dependable. Inconsistencies in participant responses and reliance on participant recollection were two potential threats to the dependability of the data obtained. To control for these a number of steps were taken. First, the prolonged nature of the three phase interview process provided an opportunity to confirm consistency of responses over time. Although there was no real way to control for participants' memory, phrasing of questions so that participants were asked to describe specific situations was one way to ensure detailed information was gained.

The final consideration, neutrality refers to the extent that the data obtained were confirmable. Confirmability refers to the extent that the data were determined by the participants and not by the biases or motivations of the researcher. Because the researcher was the primary tool in the investigation, the potential threat was for researcher bias to sway interpretation of the data. In the current study, the audit trail, member checks, and reflexive journaling were used to strengthen the likelihood that the interpretations made were grounded in the data and confirmable. First, an audit trail was used to track all data collection and management. An audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) refers to the residue of records that emerge through the study. The audit trail allowed the researcher to track each individual unit of text back to its origin in the transcript. Records were kept in a number of ways.

For each participant the following records were kept: a clean copy of transcripts from each interview, a copy of the coded transcript, the sorted transcript segments, a copy of the individual summary, copies of correspondence, and any comments or clarifications offered by the participant through the member check process. To ensure that individual units of text could be traced back to their origin, each line of the transcript was numbered. Then any time a unit of text was analyzed it was cited using the line number and identifying initials. The member checks provided an opportunity for participants to confirm that the findings obtained were in fact what they said and what they meant. Reflexive journaling involved writing memos throughout the study articulating potential researcher bias as well as methodological decisions made and reasons for those decisions. The memos provided an opportunity to examine emerging findings in relation to the researcher's own personal values and interests. Throughout the study, reflexive journaling was used to record the researcher's reactions, intuitions, and evolving perspectives. This enabled the researcher to continually check back with her initial set of biases and ensure that she was not being swayed by those biases. During data analysis, the memos also assisted the researcher to keep track of emerging themes and clusters, and to document questions asked in subsequent interviews. The reflexive journal provided a concrete chronology of data collection and analysis. The journal also provided documentation for data collection and analysis decisions that were made and the rationale for making those decisions. Memos were written following interviews and data analysis sessions and maintained in a notebook designated specifically for this purpose.

Chapter 4

Results

The findings from the current study suggest a conceptual framework for understanding teachers' attitudes and beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully include students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors.

The findings within this framework are organized according to four key questions (a) What contextual and personal predispositions contributed to the initial impressions teachers formed about their focus student?; (b) What were teachers' beliefs about essential supports for teachers?; (c) How do teachers describe the practices they used to address student challenging behaviors?; (d) What are teachers' reflections on how their beliefs and attitudes changed as a result of including a student with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior? The findings for each of these questions will now be described.

What Contextual and Personal Predispositions Contributed to the Initial Impressions

Teachers Formed About Their Focus Student and Inclusion?

Several contextual and personal predispositions toward inclusion and challenging behaviors appeared to have influenced two types of initial impressions, apprehension or confidence, teachers had about having a student with disabilities in their classroom. These predispositions can be conceptualized according to three interacting influences (a) a school vision toward inclusion, (b) personal beliefs about classroom management, and (c) the degree and type of exposure to challenging behaviors and students with developmental disabilities. Each of these contextual and personal predispositions appear

to have interacted with one another to lead to initial impressions teachers had about their focus student's inclusion in their classroom. These predispositions are discussed below.

School Vision

"I think having everyone on the same page in the building and sharing that philosophy of 'you do what's right for the kid' is important."

When discussing the initial impressions they formed about their focus student, teachers referred to the extent that a culture of inclusion existed in their building. An inclusive school vision was characterized as a commitment to welcome all students and to meet the needs of each individual child. Collectively, teachers described common visions toward inclusion that ranged from some inclusion to full inclusion. All five teachers from Roosevelt Elementary, Mary from Polk Elementary, Desiree from Johnson Elementary, and Melinda from Adams Elementary described their schools as being inclusive schools where all children were welcome. At these three schools, inclusion was a standard practice where it was expected that all children who had disabilities would be included in general education settings. In contrast, six of the teachers described being in schools where inclusion occurred, but typically only in response to external variables such as strong parental advocacy and or the award of grant. In these schools (i.e., Lincoln, Ford, Eisenhower, and Jackson) inclusive practices were described by teachers as accepted by some but not all teachers and lacked administrative leadership. Even when an inclusive school vision existed, (e.g., Roosevelt Elementary) teachers suggested that students with the most severe disabilities (i.e., behavioral or cognitive) were still placed in settings (i.e., alternative special school) outside of the local school. Teachers perceived that general education and sometimes even special education personnel were

not equipped to deal with the most severe needs that some children have and that it was in the child's best interest to find a placement elsewhere that could offer them with specialized services.

Personal Beliefs about Classroom Management

The second level of contextual and personal predisposition that may have contribute to the initial impressions teachers had about including their focus student was their views on classroom management. The teachers day to day classroom management practice prior to including their focus student was characterized by four common approaches (a) looking at students from a strengths based perspective, (b) establishing consistent behavioral expectations, (c) fostering rapport and relationships, and (d) encouraging student empowerment. Each of these classroom management practices will now be discussed.

Strengths based perspective. As classroom managers, 13 of the teachers interviewed described and gave examples how of they looked for and emphasized the positive side of what students in their classroom do. For example Laurie recalled how she made a conscious change during her first year of teaching from correcting and reprimanding students to acknowledging and rewarding positive behaviors. Said Laurie, "I was so used to saying 'No, don't do this' or 'That's wrong.' And now I was constantly and purposefully looking for 'Oh, that's wonderful' or 'That's great' and really looking at the positives. I think it was definitely better. I think it changed the atmosphere of my classroom." Similarly, LeAnn recalled making a conscious effort to focus on the positive qualities of a student in her class who "drove her crazy." By the end of the school year

she felt that she saw the student in a different light just because of her attentiveness to the child's positive qualities.

Establishing consistent expectations. The second common feature of classroom management philosophy discussed by 13 teachers was the importance of establishing consistent behavioral expectations. According to Jillian, "Being organized, having clear boundaries that are consistent, and sticking with them. Things like that really deter a lot of behaviors already." Teachers described that students should be aware of the limits to their behaviors and what the teacher expected from them academically, behaviorally, and socially. According to Penny, you have to "Help them [students] understand the rules, it has to be kind of direct and let them know how it is. But yet you can't be too stern because they'll all be going home crying and they won't want to come back. You have to find a happy medium." LeAnn felt that setting expectations was a learning experience for her students that helped to prepare them for the future. Some teachers used incentive or behavior monitoring systems in conjunction with establishing expectations to acknowledge and reward students for appropriate behaviors.

Building rapport and relationships. A third common feature of the classroom management approach used by participants was the development of rapport and relationships between the teacher and their students and between students. Twelve teachers interviewed discussed trying to create a cooperative atmosphere where students get along with and help one another. Said Debbie, "I like them to interact. I like them to work with each other. I do a lot of buddy systems where they help each other." Some teachers (e.g., Ernie and Leigh) felt it was important for all students, but especially students who engage in behavior problems, to develop friendships. Ernie felt that

without positive friendships his students were more likely to act out. According to Ernie, kids with problems gravitate to one another and then you have a group of kids who all have poor behaviors and are now influencing one another in a negative way. Taking steps to build peer friendships was seen as a way of preventing this from happening. Said Ernie, "They have to work with different people all the time. So, I think they get to know each other a little better. And I think they know that I'm always there." To promote friendships and cooperative relationships among students, participants discussed using strategies such as cooperative learning, peer buddies, and talking to students about how to interact and treat each other.

In addition to promoting peer relationships, several teachers placed importance on the relationships they formed with their students. These teachers wanted to create classroom environments where their students trusted in them and felt supported by the teacher. For example, Melinda described creating a "classroom where the children are comfortable, where they can take risks, and they can be considerate to each other and show compassion." Jillian expressed a similar idea when she described her classroom as a "caring environment" where students can "feel safe." Mary and also described their classrooms using terms such as "home" and "family."

Encouraging student empowerment. The fourth belief about classroom management described by eight teachers was the importance of empowering their students to be a part of the classroom management system and taking responsibility for themselves. Said Leigh, "When I first started as a teacher I was just making sure that I followed what I was suppose to be doing. But then as I became more comfortable with the curriculum, I began adjusting to make things more interesting. And then trying to

come up with the children being more responsible. Instead of me being the one responsible. I was trying to let them know that they're also responsible for their education." For example, some teachers taught their students skills such as putting up their hands up when it gets too noisy, how to ask for help, and wait their turn. Mary, Desiree, Debbie, Alice and Leslie encouraged their students to have classroom jobs such as taking attendance, cleaning the classroom, and goal setting. Leigh and Mary encouraged their students to set goals and track their own behaviors.

Degree and Type of Exposure to Challenging Behaviors

"I'm embarrassed to admit this but prior to becoming a public education teacher, I always had a fear of kids with disabilities. I didn't trust myself. I didn't know how to act. I didn't know the proper thing to do. It was just an uncomfortableness on my part."

Thus far teachers described functioning within the context of an inclusive building culture where they created classroom environments grounded in their own personal beliefs about classroom management. A third predisposition that appeared to have influenced the types of initial impressions teachers formed was the degree and type of prior exposure teachers had with students with developmental disabilities and students with or without disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors and the extent they had training to work with this population.

Prior Experience and Training. Teachers' prior experiences ranged from indirect experiences through student reputations and teacher stories to their own direct prior experience and training. Of the 14 participants, four (Peter, Desire, Melinda, & Ernie) were certified in and had experience teaching special education. Of these four, Melinda had experience teaching students with developmental disabilities and Desire and Ernie

had experience teaching students with emotional and behavior disorders. The fourth teacher Peter had only worked with students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities). The other ten teachers were only certified in general education and their experiences with inclusion were largely limited to students with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Melinda was the only teacher who had experience including a student with a developmental disability; however this occurred while she was employed as a special education teacher. All of the teachers described experiences they had working with students, with and without disabilities who had behavior problems. When teachers had experience with students who engaged in problem behaviors they tended to have disabilities such as emotional behavior disorders, learning disabilities, or ADHD.

Student reputations and teacher stories. Most teachers heard other teachers talking about both positive and negative experiences they had including students with developmental disabilities and/or behavior problems prior to their own inclusion experience. For example Laurie recalled hearing, “Stories of teachers talking about what their student would do or how they were reacting or carrying on.” Teachers recalled receiving ominous warnings from their colleagues such as “brace yourself” prior to the arrival of the students who engaged in problem behavior. Some teachers felt that the reputations students developed because of these types of comments were damaging and created a cloud that followed the student through their school career. Said Ernie, “It’s like a step. It just gets worse each year. If they’re bad in kindergarten, then the first grade teacher hears that. Now she looks for this and even the little tiny things become a pain and then everything is blown out of proportion.” LeAnn commented similarly when

she said, “If it’s a negative reputation, then it’s a negative effect on the child. Teachers will have this preconceived notion and it’s hard to change a preconceived notion.” In another example, Debbie recalled a student who was described to her as “being wild” who did very well in her class. Her feeling after that experience was that “If a child is given the right setting, he’s going to be okay.”

Teachers recalled hearing descriptions of their focus students that included “violent,” “volatile,” and “disruptive.” For example, Leigh recalled Timmy’s reputation for being “violent” and engaging in behaviors such as biting, kicking, and spitting. Similarly, Penny recalled hearing how Manny skipped first grade because he was too aggressive and people were afraid that he would seriously hurt one of his peers. Related, Alice and Debbie recalled hearing about all of the problems that occurred between the staff who worked with their focus child during previous school years.

Types of Initial Impressions Formed

“My feelings at the time, I’ll be honest with you, I was afraid.”

This section describes the initial impressions formed by teachers about including their focus students. The type of attitude formed (i.e., apprehension or confidence) appeared to be influenced by a combination of factors that included the building vision, their classroom management beliefs, and the types of prior experiences they had.

Initial apprehensions. Ten teachers expressed forming initial apprehensions about including their focus students. These ten teachers described having a limited base of direct experience with students like their focus student. Said Leslie, “I felt that I really didn’t know anything about that way of being.” LeAnn felt similarly when she said,

“Sometimes when you’re the first person to get this situation and there aren’t any previous examples out there and you’re setting the precedent it’s scary.”

In addition to a lack of direct experience, initial apprehensions were often the result of what teachers heard about their student prior to their coming to the class. Said LeAnn, “They come with the reputation. It makes me feel more apprehensive. It may make some people feel more comfortable because now they know about it. But I think for the most part it makes everyone a little more apprehensive.” When teachers heard stories about how “violent” or “disruptive” the student was they were apprehensive about their own ability to be effective and wondered whether inclusion was appropriate.

Having apprehensions prompted these ten teachers to question whether inclusion would be successful and the kind of year they would have as a result. They worried about whether the student would disrupt their classroom management and organization system or whether they would be able to meet the student’s needs. They also worried that the student would be too difficult to manage and that they would not be able to balance the student’s needs with the needs of the rest of the class. Said Alice, “My first reaction was ‘How?’ ‘It’s not going to work.’ I was concerned with what was going to happen with the other children. I really didn’t know how it was going to work.” Laurie described how she, “Was overwhelmed at first. I was scared that I wouldn’t be successful with him and I thought, ‘Well I’m one year away from tenure. I hope I don’t mess anything up.’”

Some teachers believed that they had to prepare for the worst case scenario which often time included the belief that the student would be out of control, would not do any work, would disrupt the existing management and organization of the classroom, and

would consume all of the teacher's attention. For Leslie and other teachers, they were concerned the student would "wreak havoc" on their room. When the first day of school finally arrived, most teachers felt it was nothing like they had imagined. They were quickly relieved when they realized that it would not amount to the worst case scenarios they believed would unfold, but rather had the potential to be a successful school year. This realization was met with a sense of cautious optimism and also relief.

Initial apprehensions also stemmed from concerns about working with other adults such as a paraprofessional or a special education teacher. Said Debbie, "I just wasn't sure if we could really work together." Laurie, Linda, and Debbie were uncomfortable and apprehensive with having other adults in the room and thought they would be watched, and perhaps judged all the time. They were also concerned about whether they would get along with or have personality conflicts with the in class support personnel.

Feeling confident. In contrast to teachers who developed apprehensions, Peter, Desiree, Ernie, and Melinda, all certified special education teachers, believed that they would be able to handle the behavior, academic, and social challenges their focus student presented. Melinda was able to get to know Armand through a summer program and Peter worked with his focus student during the previous school year in another teacher's classroom. Similarly, Desiree and Ernie described themselves as having many prior experiences with "tough kids" who engaged in serious behavior problems (e.g., aggression). Because of this they felt that the behavioral needs their focus students presented were not beyond their means as a teacher and thus did not feel overwhelmed or apprehensive about including them. This level of experience, exposure, and preparation

was seen by these three teachers as a critical mitigating factor to why they did not feel apprehensive or anxious.

What do teachers believe are essential supports for teachers including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior?

"I was very overwhelmed. And I was thinking, 'Is this really the right thing to do for Timmy?'"

This section will describe the struggles teachers faced and two key features of support described by the teachers. At the schoolwide level was a context of social support where an inclusive culture existed within the building. A context of social support was characterized by four main components and included a (a) administrative posture toward inclusion, (b) acceptance and practice of inclusion building wide, (c) collegial atmosphere, and (d) in class support personnel for the student. The second feature was described as situation specific supports where members of the building community provide direct support to teachers during situations or times where they were experiencing particular struggles. The schoolwide context of social support will first be described. Next, I will describe the types of struggles teachers faced day to day. Finally, I will described the situation specific supports used to help teachers deal with struggles.

Context of Social Support

The context of social support, described a schoolwide culture toward inclusion that is characterized by an administrative posture on inclusion, a general practice and acceptance of inclusion building wide, a collegial atmosphere, and the provision of in class support personnel for the focus students. The context of social support was critical

in helping teachers feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed when including their focus students.

Administrative posture. Administrative posture was described as principals and vice principals expressing their support for inclusion through both statements and actions. Eleven of the teachers believed that the extent that their administrator demonstrated a public support for inclusion was relevant to the extent that they felt supported. In several situations, teachers described their administrators as very supportive of inclusion and taking steps to make it known amongst the entire faculty that their school was an inclusive school. According to Leigh, “At Roosevelt we try. Even if it looks like it’s not gonna work, we try.” In doing this, they sent the message that inclusion was valued and would be supported. Most teachers described their principals as encouraging inclusion efforts, encouraging teachers to individualize for their students, and making sure that each year teachers had a diverse array of learning needs in their classrooms. Peter suggested that one reason why his administration was so supportive of inclusion was because the principal and superintendent both had special education backgrounds. Melinda and Desiree expressed that by offering help and jumping in their principals sent a message to the school community that inclusion was important. In contrast, four teachers (LeAnn, Laurie, Ernie, and Leslie) were not sure where their building administrator stood on inclusion. This ambiguity was best expressed by LeAnn who said, “I think that he was open to the idea because he never said anything negative about it. And if someone complained about it he always tried to put it in a positive light. But I never heard him be really vocal about it.” In these three schools the teachers described a

much greater range of opinions regarding the acceptance and practice of inclusion among teachers.

Acceptance and practice of inclusion. Teachers found it helpful that other members of their school community were supportive of inclusion and had experience with inclusion. The general acceptance and practice of inclusion contributed to the context of social support in that most of the teachers interviewed were not the only ones practicing inclusion, thus providing some degree of comfort even initially when they were apprehensive and during times of struggle. Acceptance was not always readily apparent though. Teachers recalled their colleagues being afraid, apprehensive, and resistant to the idea of inclusion initially. In some teachers' experiences there were other teachers in the building who viewed the only solution to more challenging students as getting them out of general education and into a self-contained classroom. However, after seeing successful experiences and in some cases being a part of successful experiences, school building faculties were described as becoming more accepting of inclusion and engaging in inclusive practices more regularly. Said Debbie, "I think initially people were afraid. But now, I think people are becoming more confident with the whole idea."

Most participants were clear to point out however, there were still teachers who did not want to include students with more significant needs and who were particularly opposed to including students with severe behavior problems. Generally though, teachers found it helpful when their colleagues were also having (or had) inclusion experiences because they could learn together and help one another out

Collegial atmosphere. All of the teachers discussed the extent that a collegial atmosphere among the faculty, administration, and support professionals existed at each of the respective schools. A collegial atmosphere was described as one where teachers were comfortable asking colleagues and administrators for help. It was also described as an atmosphere where asking for help did not place teachers at risk of being labeled a “problem” or a “complainer.” A collegial atmosphere contributed to the teachers’ feelings of support. Said Mary, “You don’t feel afraid to say, ‘You know what? I don’t know what to do. Help me.’” All teachers believed they had people they could go to when they needed support, however, the extent that there was an atmosphere or infrastructure (e.g., consistent model of inclusion used at the school) that encouraged asking for help varied. For example, Laurie, Ernie, Leslie, and LeAnn were not comfortable approaching their administrators and in some cases professional colleagues (e.g., school psychologist) for help and problem solving because they either perceived these individuals as ineffective or because they would be labeled a “complainer.”

In class support personnel. All teachers discussed the importance of having in class support personnel (i.e., paraprofessional or special education teacher) available for their focus child. The way teachers perceived the role of in class support personnel seemed to be related to the extent that the teacher perceived themselves as the person primarily responsible for the focus student. Responsibility meant that they were the ones who developed instruction, modifications, and interventions for the focus student. In many cases though, teachers solicited ideas from other people as they were developing materials or strategies. Eight teachers who had a paraeducator assigned to the student and who did not have a special education teacher in class with them perceived themselves

as the person primarily responsible for the focus student. In contrast, Debbie and Alice had a special education teacher who was assigned only to their focus student. These two teachers believed that the special education teacher was the person primarily responsible for Kenny. Mary, Melinda, and Desire believed their relationship with their special education counterpart was a partnership where both teachers were equally responsible for the focus student.

Regardless of who they perceived was primarily responsible for the student, teachers found it helpful that they had someone available to assist with adapting work, implementing behavior support strategies, or providing one to one assistance when the student needed help. Said Linda, "You can't see all when you're trying to teach a lesson and that's why it's great to have another pair of eyes. To be able to help with things that might be going on." In class support personnel were perceived as most effective when they were able to blend into the classroom and disguise that they were there specifically for the focus student. Generally, all of the teachers interviewed believed that without the in class support person they would be unable to successfully include the child and balance the needs of their other students. Said Alice, "It's [in class supports] just invaluable. You can't be everywhere at once. You can't be all things to all people. And the time factor, let's face it you've got 25 things to do and you've only got an hour, you're going to have to pick and choose. You're not going to get it all done, or if you get it all done, you're not going to be doing a very good job."

According to teachers, the key to a successful partnership with in class support personnel was the extent that the adults were all able to get along and communicate with one another. Said Debbie, "I think the most important thing we can do is if something

bothers you, you need to tell me. And the other way around. If something is not clicking, if there's an issue or a problem of any kind, if we talk it out, it'll be fine. But if we don't it's going to blow up." Teachers appreciated the in class support personnel's sense of work ethic. They appreciated when in class support personnel were consistent, timely, and willing to go the extra mile for a student.

Struggles Teachers Faced

Regardless of their initial apprehensions or feelings of confidence, all of the teachers approached including their focus student with the intention that they would do the best job they could. They were also reassured in knowing that they were in buildings where a culture of support existed and when they needed help it would be available. Most teachers experienced an initial relief that the situation would not be as dire as they initially thought it might be. Their inclusion efforts were not without challenges however, with all teachers struggling at some point during the school year with how best to handle certain situations or make inclusion work. In this section, three key struggles are described: student centered struggles, conflicts with parents, and conflicts with professionals.

Student Centered Struggles. Although teachers spoke fondly of their students, all teachers were nonetheless challenged at some point in the school year by the degree of need their student posed. One major challenge was the very nature of problem behavior. For most of the teachers challenging behavior was seen as disrupting the class and distracting their attention away from other students. Half of the teachers worried that the student or others might get hurt or would be afraid in the classroom. Such as with Timmy, which according to Leigh was, "The frightening part when he begins throwing

things.” She recalled an incident where Timmy was throwing dominos so hard that they were splintering as they shot around the room. When students became this agitated it was frightening and frustrating for the teachers because they felt a sense of responsibility for everyone’s safety. According to Jillian, “It’s a scary situation when you don’t feel safe and you want to feel safe for your children.” In addition to safety issues, LeAnn, Leigh and Beatrice also recalled worrying about the potential impact the behavior would have on their focus students’ reputation with the other children.

A related struggle was the amount of time that was needed to plan for and then implement strategies in the classroom. Some teachers described the struggle associated with finding the balance between meeting the needs of the student who was included with the needs of the entire class. There was concern that it was unfair to other students when the focus student took up too much of their time. Said Ernie, “Not letting me teach or not letting me help other children that I have to spend all my time there. I don’t think that it’s right for one kid to ruin it for 20 other kids.” Similarly, Peter said, “It’s a management thing. You’ve got to realize that you have other kids. That’s where the frustration comes in. Because you want to do something to help that child, but you still have all these other ones you need to be working with too. So the time isn’t there.”

Often challenging behaviors occurred in response to academic tasks and as a result teachers struggled with how to adapt curricular material and instruction in ways that resulted in productive student participation. There were times when some of the teachers questioned whether they were doing enough academically for their focus student, particularly when modified materials resulted in students doing very different tasks than the rest of the class. Another related struggle for some of the teachers was that

the pace of progress made was often slow and sometimes involved setbacks and regression. Because the focus student's peers were learning at a much faster rate, some teachers worried that their student was not learning enough or that they did not comprehend what was being taught.

Conflicts with parents. At some point in the school year, most teachers struggled with differences of opinion with parents. Some teachers were frustrated by decisions parents of their focus student made regarding how they would deal with problem behavior. For example, Debbie and Jillian were frustrated by their focus children's parents' tendency to minimize the seriousness of the students' behaviors. Debbie tried to empathize but was nonetheless frustrated when she said, "I'm a parent. I understand how she feels. I know how hard it is to have to say that there's a problem with one of your kids. But if you can't accept that, you can't help them. And that's what it all boils down to is giving them what they need." In some situations the conflict between the school and the parent caused the teacher to feel like they were caught in the middle. It was also frustrating to teachers when they did not perceive there was cooperation or collaboration between them and the parents. In Leslie's situation, the school and the parents were engaged in due process proceedings. As a result, Leslie felt that she always had to second guess the decisions she was making about her focus student. Some teachers felt that unilateral decisions made by their focus student's parents had the effect of sabotaging all of the efforts they had put into making the program successful. For example, it was frustrating to some teachers when parents were closed off to intervention options that might help their child such as having an aide or complying with the doctor's medication recommendations. Other examples included decisions made by the parent

such as letting the student stay home one day week just because he did not like going to school or not following through at home when a serious incident occurred at school. For Melinda, it was difficult when her focus child's parents would make more of a situation than needed such as requesting meetings with administration for issues that she felt she could have easily handled.

Several teachers (Penny, Leigh, Paul, and Beatrice) expressed concerns about the reactions of the parents of other students in the class. In these situations, the focus children had severe reputations for being "violent" and "very aggressive" and the teachers had some concerns about how the parents would react to hearing their child was in the same class as the focus student and subsequently how they would respond when parents would question them about what was going on. For some teachers this meant having to divert energy away from their teaching responsibilities to resolving these types of issues either through the administration or corresponding directly with parents.

Conflicts with professionals. Some teachers discussed the strain of conflicts between themselves and other professionals (e.g., paraprofessional, special education teacher, related services provider). Three types of conflicts among personnel were described: differences in personality or opinion, lack of consistency among personnel, and indifference or lack of understanding by some members of the school community toward inclusion efforts.

Most teachers discussed struggling with or being frustrated by differences in opinion or personality with other professional personnel. For example, Debbie observed that the previous year was filled with "nitpicking," "backstabbing," and "arguing" among the professionals working with Kenny. This not only made her feel apprehensive about

having Kenny in her class, but upon reflection realized that this was the reason why the previous year went so badly for him. According to Debbie it was “adults acting like children.”

Two teachers recalled a past experience having to work with other professionals who did not believe in inclusion. Opposing views made it difficult for Melinda and Mary because their energy was diverted away from the quality of the program, to defending their position and convincing their colleagues that inclusion was the right thing to do. When conflicts occurred between different in-class support personnel, the general education teacher felt that they had to take on the role of “peacemaker” and felt uncomfortable about them not getting along.

The second struggle that emerged among a few teachers was the lack of consistency across personnel. For example LeAnn perceived the related arts teachers as not being compliant with the modifications required by the student and felt frustrated by their lack of follow through. In another situation, Alice felt that the paraprofessional consistently chose to use strategies that that were in conflict with what the team decided to do.

Finally, some teachers described frustration associated with their administrator’s or colleagues indifference toward inclusion or their lack of understanding about disability. For example, Desiree recalled having to placate and appease members of the school community because they lacked of understanding about Dale’s disability and his actions was causing them to resent him. Said Desiree, “Just because they don’t know, they think the kids are out doing it on purpose and they’re targeting them. So I think they take it personally. And then the rumor mill starts. They have no idea that this is part of a

disability.” Leslie believed that the degree of administrative support had everything to do with the extent that administrators understood the unique needs of children with severe disabilities. Because of this lack of understanding, the administrator is less likely to provide needed supports such as providing opportunities for the paraprofessional to receive training.

Situation Specific Supports for the Teacher

“It’s imperative to know that when that bad day does occur you have some place to turn, some place to have a shoulder to cry on if need be.”

Recall that teachers described two layers of support a schoolwide context of social support and situation supports for specific needs. The context of social support reflected a schoolwide culture toward inclusion and collaboration among faculty and administration. As teachers included their student, day to day they encountered struggles and frustrations. In response to these times of difficulty, members (e.g., fellow teachers, specialized personnel, administrators) of the school community provided the teacher with situation specific supports. In this section, five types of situation specific supports are described and include interpersonal supports, collaboration opportunities, administrative support, parent support, and awareness building activities.

Interpersonal supports. There was an interpersonal dimension to the supports provided that was important to many of the teachers interviewed. Interpersonal supports were described as people who cared about and who listen to you during difficult times. Interpersonal support typically came from colleagues and family members. Said Leigh, “I really appreciate my support team. And the more that I see how much they’re capable of and what they do and how much they give of themselves to these children, it’s

incredible. It's just astounding." For some participants talking with other teachers, friends, or family members provided opportunities for brainstorming, venting, and validation. Their peers were able to provide them with moral support and the wisdom of their own experiences. Said Laurie, "The number one thing to get me through was my peers. Just telling them about every bad thing that happened that day." This was helpful to teachers because they believed they were not alone and that there were people in their lives who would listen to them and offer them comfort, reassurance, and guidance during difficult times. It was also helpful because it provided the opportunity for the teachers to receive positive feedback about a job well done.

Collaboration opportunities. Many teachers believed that it was critical to have opportunities to collaborate with other professionals around issues of need for their focus student. The extent to which collaboration opportunities were available depended on whether a collegial atmosphere was encouraged building wide. Collaboration was perceived as important and helpful because it offered teachers suggestions and ideas that they may not have thought of or tried otherwise. According to Jillian, having people to collaborate with "Has been very supportive for getting advice and bouncing off ideas." Six teachers suggested the importance of regular team meetings, formal or informal, to discuss how things are going and brainstorm around problem areas. These six teachers described their experience meeting on a regular basis with other team members to celebrate accomplishments and brainstorm strategies for difficulties the student was having in the classroom. According to Leslie, "I think it is really important to get together on a regular basis to conference with the speech teacher, the school psychologist, the IEP teacher or anyone who happens to be working with this child to brainstorm."

These types of meetings were particularly helpful when they were routinely planned as opposed to happening on a hit or miss basis.

Administrative support. The support provided by administration was also perceived as critical to 10 of the teachers interviewed. These 10 teachers described their building principals and in one situation director of special education as willing to jump in and help, back the teacher up, and make life a little bit easier. For example, Leslie appreciated that her principal offered her opportunities to leave early on certain days knowing that she had been under a great deal of stress. In other situations, the principal offered reassurance and affirmation that the student was benefiting from being there. Leigh also felt that it was helpful that her administration clarified why Timmy was being included and what the expectations for academics and curriculum were prior to the start of the school year. In addition to the support of their principal, two teachers, Leigh and Peter, believed that having school board support was also important. They believed that the school board is in the position of allocating or not allocating financial and other resources for supports, such as a full time aide, that make inclusion possible. For one teacher it was the director of special education who offered the greatest degree of administrative support. LeAnn found it helpful and reassuring to know that she could go to the director and that person would be there to help her out or provide whatever she needed (e.g., workshops and hiring an aide).

Parent support. Having regular communication and receiving positive feedback from parents was perceived by some teachers as very helpful and supportive. Said Leslie, "I needed to know that the parents were pleased with me and that was very valuable." Since a number of teachers were apprehensive about their ability to include the focus

student, hearing positive feedback from parents was reassuring. Said Laurie, “She just made me feel comfortable. She made me feel like I was doing a great job.”

Regular communication was also seen as helpful because it offered an opportunity to stay in touch with what was happening at home and in a few situations ideas for how to deal with problem behavior in the classroom. Regular communication with parents helped some of the teachers to better understand the nature of the disability, the child, and strategies that worked or did not work in other settings.

Awareness building activities. Another source of support for some teachers was having an awareness about the disability and the child prior to the student coming to their class, although they did not always have this opportunity. They discussed different types of awareness activities that were helpful including inservice training (e.g., an overview of Autism), reading about the disability, learning information about the student, meeting the student, and having a plan in place. According to three teachers center based training was helpful when the content presented were strategies the teachers could turn around and actually use in their classroom with their focus students. One suggestion about center based training was to be considerate of the amount of time the teacher is being taken out of the classroom.

All of the teachers found it helpful when they received some information about the student and the nature of the student’s disability prior to the school year starting. However, a few teachers noted that this did not always happen, particularly when a student joins the class once the year has already started. LeAnn, Mary, Penny, and Melinda suggested that teachers “read up all they can” to learn about the student and the nature of their disability. Meeting the student ahead of time was also considered a

helpful practice. For example, Peter and Melinda both made explicit reference to how getting to know their focus student directly and their training in special education made them minimally apprehensive about the focus student coming to their classrooms. LeAnn, Mary, and Laurie both expressed how helpful it was that they could meet with their focus children's mothers who were able to best explain who their child was, what worked for them, and the best way to approach them.

How do teachers describe practices they use to address challenging behaviors?

When teachers began their experience of including the focus student, they were faced with behavioral challenges that created frustrations and stress. When this occurred, teachers relied on the network of social support that existed in their building to provide them with assistance when needed. In addition to specific supports for the teacher, steps were taken to design and implement interventions for the focus child to improve the behavior and membership in the classroom. In this section, teachers' perceptions about the types of intervention strategies used and how those strategies were designed are described.

Core Beliefs about Interventions for the Focus Student

Although none of the teachers had training in positive behavior support, they expressed core beliefs about the types of interventions they used with their focus student that were consistent with the PBS orientation. These beliefs included: being flexible and following emerging needs, looking for positive qualities in the student, understanding the student and what was happening, and having expectations for the focus student's full membership in the class.

Being flexible. Six teachers discussed the importance of being flexible and following the needs of the child. “Not to be afraid. But expect the unexpected. And then go with the flow.” Flexibility was repeated time and time again as being an essential ingredient to their success. Said Debbie, “Flexible. I think that probably sums it up. I think any teacher has to be flexible.” A willingness to listen to different ideas, try new things, think out of the box, go with the flow of what was happening in the moment, and staying in tune to changing needs were all examples of ways teachers described themselves as being flexible. Said Mary, “You have to let things go. So there are days where you just shrug your shoulders and say ‘Maybe today’s not the day for this, so let’s try it tomorrow.’”

Looking for the positives. A second core belief described by all of the teachers was that they looked for positive qualities that the child had to offer. Looking at the focus student in this way was consistent with their beliefs about strengths based class management practices. Strengths they could build off, interests the child had, and affective qualities that made the child endearing to the teachers were all examples of how they looked toward the positives. Teachers described forming an appreciation of and respect for the unique gifts and contributions their focus child made to their classrooms. According to Mary it is important to “Really focus on the positives, reinforce positives, and celebrate the positives.” Teachers expressed genuine caring for their focus child and hoped that they felt the teacher was someone they could trust and count on. Said Debbie, “I guess that’s just part of who I am. It’s important for me to help a child succeed and the best they’re able to be.” Similarly, Leslie said, “I truly believe that it’s important for each child to realize they bring something to this classroom that no one else can bring and

that this classroom is special because of what all of you have that's different from anybody else in the room."

Understanding the student and what is happening. Understanding the student and what was contributing to the occurrences of problem behavior was the third belief expressed by half of the teachers. For example, Mary described her student John as "The type of child who if not given the opportunity to feel his own sense of worth we could be in a very different position which would be scary." She then designed interventions that helped John to feel like he had more control in the classroom. One teacher continually questioned what was going on with her student as a way to understand him. Said, Leigh, "Why is the child doing this? What's causing this? How can I stop this from happening?" Several teachers sought to identify situations that created stress and frustration for their student and then tried to be responsive through intervention planning. Often though, teachers wanted to understand why the student would act that way but were unable to come to any conclusions or explanations.

Expectations for membership. The fourth core belief was that intervention strategies should lead to the student being a member of the classroom community. Said Melinda, "I feel strongly that it is important that children have every opportunity to be as much a part of the classroom, their community, and society in general as possible." All teachers wanted their focus students to be just another kid in the class and believed that is what their focus student wanted as well. For example, referring to her focus student Penny said, "I think when he didn't fit, when he didn't feel part of it. He would get angry about that." Teachers also expressed wanting their focus students and the rest of the class to understand that everyone was equal and they all had work to do, but sometimes,

the type of work, the amount of work, or the amount of time needed to complete the work might be different for different students and that was okay. Said Ernie, “I don’t have any secrets. I just talk to them and treat them like the rest of the kids. I don’t treat anyone any differently. They have the same rules – same everything.”

The Ways Interventions Were Designed

When designing intervention strategies, all of the teachers relied on the core beliefs just discussed, their beliefs about classroom management, their intuition and experience with the student, and their experience as a teacher. Generally, teachers approached intervention design as a problem solving task where they considered the problem situation, brainstormed ideas, and then tried strategies out. Teachers described fine tuning strategies over time through a process of trial and error. They emphasized that designing interventions was not cut and dry. To a great extent, intervention design was a matter of contextual fit where they considered the needs of the student and balanced that with the needs of the rest of the class. Most teachers suggested that there was no right answer or perfect strategy and they needed to have a basketful of options available to them. Some teachers discussed that they observed their student and reflected on problem situations to come up with strategies.

Most of the teachers interviewed discussed having opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and or the child’s parents when developing intervention strategies. Four teachers, Debbie, Desiree, Melinda, and Alice, collaborated with a special education teacher while designing interventions. While other teachers, such as Leslie and Leigh sought out colleagues or knowledgeable specialists (e.g., speech

therapist) that they could get advice from or bounce ideas off of. Laurie worked closely with her focus child's mother who was pivotal in giving her strategies to try.

Types of Interventions Used

Teachers did not develop formal behavior management plans nor were they trained in PBS, however, they nonetheless used a comprehensive approach to supporting the focus student that was consistent with positive behavior support. All of the teachers used combinations of intervention strategies to address their focus student's challenging behavior. All of the teachers described strategies they used to be proactive and improve the match between the environment and the student's needs. All teachers modified both the curriculum and academic tasks so that their students were able to productively participate in the classroom activities. Many teachers described adding visual cues and improved the structure of a routine. A number of teachers also described providing the student with more choices and opportunities to sample new experiences.

Thirteen teachers discussed using strategies to help their focus students develop relationships. It was important to these thirteen teachers that their focus students had friendships because that was an important part of why the student was being included in the first place. They helped to facilitate these by first demystifying the disability to other students in the class. Some teachers like Debbie talked with the other students to explain about the disability and the student's needs. Other teachers chose to not address the issue of disability but rather to just remind the class that everyone needs help sometime. To build friendships teachers encouraged peer buddies during work time and transitions. They also tried to model interacting with the student and acted as an interpreter when other kids did not understand what the focus student was saying or doing. Seeing

friendships develop was satisfying to all the teachers because it meant that the focus student was just another kid in the class. It was also validating to teachers how empathic and supportive kids could be. Said Jillian, “The kids really took to him. They really went out of their way to help. They didn’t make him feel different. They just always included him while playing.”

Strategies designed to reinforce appropriate behaviors and also to respond when undesired behaviors occurred was a third type of interventions used by all teachers. Teachers described wanting the student to know and feel good when he did something that was appropriate. They offered social praise and incentives to encourage the student and reinforce positive behaviors. When undesired behaviors occurred, teachers described their approach as being consistent with what they did with other kids in the class. At times though most teachers needed to use strategies to redirect or neutralize a situation that were designed specifically for the focus student. In general, most teachers described using verbal and nonverbal redirection strategies and emphasized the importance of catching the situation before it became a crisis. Said Leigh, “You have to be willing to know and back off if you see that he’s becoming frustrated. You have to look for warning signs and make sure that you’re reading them correctly and not too late.” Most teachers discussed the importance of having a place in the building or a strategy (e.g., taking a walk) available for when their student became agitated and needed to calm down. The opportunity for the student to calm down in private was seen as important to preserving a positive reputation with other students as well as maintaining management of the class.

Finally, seven of the teachers discussed teaching their focus students skills to make them more competent thereby making the child less likely to engage in problem behaviors. Primarily, these seven teachers focused on social skills such as getting along with others and making good choices about their behavior. It was their hope that the focus students would leave their class more prepared socially and as result have less need for problem behaviors.

What are teachers' reflections on how their beliefs and attitudes changed as a result of including a student with challenging behavior in their classroom?

Upon reflection, 13 teachers reported experiencing a positive change in their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. Said LeAnn, "It changed in a positive way because I thought it was workable. It showed me that I can work with them without being trained. That as a regular school teacher I could work with a kid considered special ed." Once teachers began to have successful direct experiences with their focus student they developed more confidence in their ability to be successful. Several teachers also described how as successes occurred they were more motivated and hopeful about including their student. Many teachers described their successful experiences as helping them to develop a sense of self-assurance that they would be fine working with the student and that they could provide their focus child with what they needed to have a successful school year. Said Leigh, "This was a challenge for me. I feel that I can meet these challenges and feel comfortable about having a student like Timmy in my classroom, which I didn't know and never thought I would be able to do. Prior to this experience, I felt that I was in my 29th year and that when you had a special needs child, they were put into a special room. You didn't care about them, you didn't have contact

with them. And now I feel that yes, this is possible for a teacher that doesn't have a special education degree." As a result, they ended the school year more assured about their own ability to include challenging students and were more open to future inclusion opportunities.

A second key reflection had by all teachers was the extent that they saw changes in themselves as a result of the inclusion experience. Said Leigh, "I found out about myself. How I could improve as a teacher by having someone like Timmy in my classroom. The growth has been on my side as well." Collaborating with others exposed teachers to different approaches, strategies, and viewpoints about the child. Teachers believed this was helpful because it allowed them to be better prepared for future situations. Said Melissa, "I think it's helped me grow tremendously in my repertoire of skills and just being comfortable working with different kids." Upon reflection, several, but not all teachers saw themselves differently as a result of their experience, with greater confidence in their ability to be effective with challenging students and with greater understanding of the importance of inclusion.

The appropriateness of inclusion was the final reflection made by 13 teachers. Their beliefs and attitudes about when inclusion is or is not appropriate became clearer to many of the teachers. Although teachers held positive attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion they nonetheless established a boundary for when inclusion would not be appropriate. They cited a number of considerations needed when making this decision including the amount of time that was required by the teacher, the extent that their attention would be taken away from other students, and the extent that the student posed safety concerns to themselves or other students. Said Mary, "I think when it comes to the

other children's safety, everyone's bodies and feelings deserve to be safe. And when the child is unable to control his or her temper or behaviors then you have to ask yourself, 'Is this the right setting for the child and the safety of the children.'" It was their belief that the appropriateness of inclusion depended on the individual student, what is best for him/her and what is best for the class as a whole.

Chapter 5

Summary, Findings, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary

The overall purpose of this study was to understand teacher attitudes and beliefs about essential supports needed to successfully include a student with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior in a general education classroom. To this end, four specific purposes were addressed. Figure 1 provides a conceptual illustration that was used to guide my interpretation of the findings.

The first purpose was to understand the personal and contextual predispositions that influenced the different types of initial impressions teachers had about their focus student. Three predispositions appear pertinent to the types of initial impressions teachers formed. The first predisposition that influenced teachers' initial impressions was the school vision toward inclusion. School visions ranged from part time inclusion to full inclusion. The second predisposition that may have influenced the types of initial impressions teachers formed was their general beliefs about classroom management. Teachers' beliefs about classroom management included focusing on student strengths, having consistent behavioral expectations, encouraging student empowerment, and fostering meaningful relationships. The third predisposition was the extent that they had direct or indirect prior experiences with students similar to their focus students. In combination, these three predispositions appeared to be dynamic and interactive and resulting in initial feelings of confidence or apprehension regarding the inclusion of their focus student. Four teachers expressed feeling confident initially while 10 teachers expressed initial apprehensions.

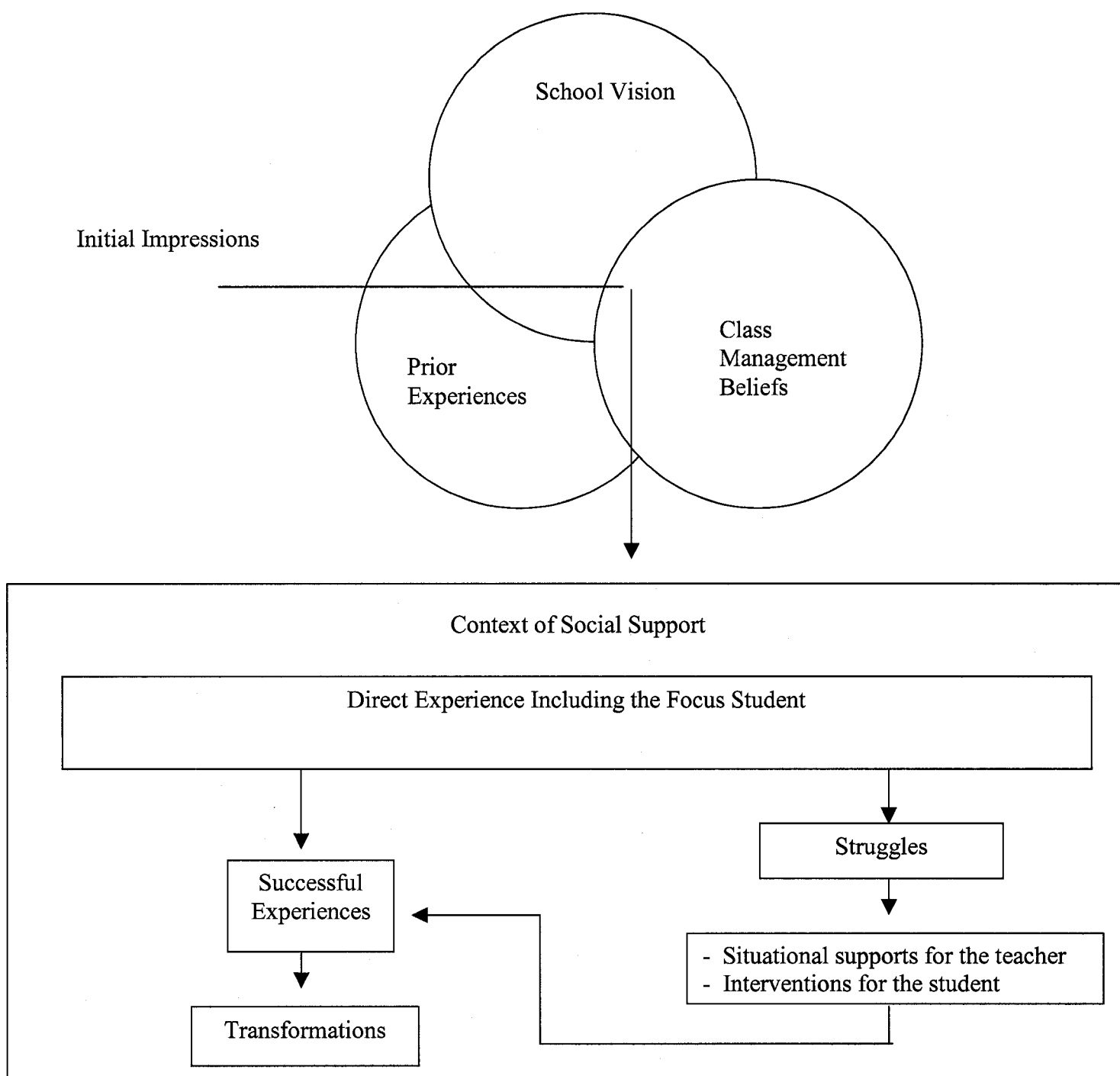


Figure 1.

Concept map for teachers' experiences including a student with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviors.

supports needed for teachers. Two levels of support were described by teachers. The first level was described as a school wide context of social support. This level of support can be conceptualized as a culture within the building where professional staff took care of and supported one another. In the current study all teachers believed that the context of social support was an important contributing factor to why they were successful with their focus student. Context of social support consisted of four main components and were present to varying degrees at all teachers' schools. These included a (a) positive and proactive administrative posture towards inclusion, (b) building wide acceptance and practice of inclusion, (c) consistent in class supports, and (d) a pervasive collegial atmosphere among faculty and administration.

As might be expected, even within a context of social support teachers experienced struggles and frustrations related to including their focus student. Among the struggles encountered included conflicts with parents and professionals, and student centered struggles regarding challenging behavior. In response to struggles and frustrations the second level of support became evident. When experiencing a struggle or frustration, members of the school community provided a number of situation specific supports to the teachers. Situation specific supports that teachers found most helpful included interpersonal supports, collaboration with others, and awareness building activities.

The third purpose of the study was to describe the types of practices teachers used to address challenging behaviors. Intervention practices were comprehensive and grounded in core beliefs that guided their development including looking for positive qualities in the child, understanding the child and what was happening, having

expectations for membership, and being flexible. Teachers used combinations of intervention practices that included strategies that were proactive, helped build relationships, reinforced appropriate behaviors, effectively responded to unwanted behaviors, and taught skills to make their students more socially competent.

The fourth purpose of the study was to describe teachers' reflections on how their beliefs and attitudes changed as a result of including their focus student. Upon reflection, teachers credited their experience as helping to change or validate their perspectives about including challenging students and helped them to grow as professionals. Despite positive experiences, teachers nonetheless held beliefs about parameters for when inclusion might not be appropriate.

Findings in Relation to the Literature

To understand more fully how the current study contributes to the existing literature, the findings will now be discussed as they relate to the research on teacher attitudes and supports, and positive behavior support.

Teacher Supports

Type of Supports. The current study both supports and extends published research on teacher attitudes on support needs for inclusion. First, consistent with the published research on inclusion, the general education teachers in the current study who included students with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviors expressed the need for supports and resources (Buell et al., 1999; Gessler-Werts et al., 1996a/b; Pearman et al., 1997; Villa et al., 1996). Several supports identified by the teachers were consistent with published reports including administrative support (Gessler-Werts et al., 1996b; Villa et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1990; York-Barr et al., 1996), collaboration opportunities

(Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Soodak et al., 1998; Williams et al., 1990), and training and preparation activities (Block & Rizzo, 1995; Janney et al., 1995b; Williams et al., 1991). One additional support identified by the teachers in this study, but not thoroughly discussed in the inclusion literature was interpersonal supports. Interpersonal supports were characterized as the availability of people who would listen to the teachers and extend personal encouragement and validation. This source of support differs from collaboration in that the intent is not necessarily to come up with a plan of action, but rather for the teacher to express personal feelings about their situation, successes, and frustrations. This finding is similar to that of Bambara et al. (2000). These researchers reported that direct care staff supporting challenging adults in group home settings identified talking and venting as important sources of support.

The current findings also extend the understanding of support needs by suggesting that there are two levels of support that includes a context of social support at the first level and situation specific supports at the second level. The context of social support could be described as an atmosphere supportive of everyone in the school community. The context of social support was characterized a supportive administrative posture toward inclusion, general acceptance and practice of inclusion among all faculty, the provision of sufficient in class support personnel and opportunities for collaboration. When in place, the context of social support reassured the teachers so that they did not feel alone, their work was important and valued, and everyone would work together. At the second level, situational supports were tailored to individual situations or teacher needs. Situational supports were provided by members of the school community and were typically fellow teachers, administrators, and paraprofessional staff. Examples of

situation specific supports included calling a team meeting to brainstorm ideas or providing extra coverage for a student. Contextual and situational supports worked together to provide support to the teacher. Because contextual supports were in place teachers' specific needs could be addressed easily. For example, Adams Elementary (Melinda) and Roosevelt Elementary (Peter, Beatrice, Leigh, Penny, and Jillian) both had structures in place to foster team meetings and common planning time. When a teacher faced a problem situation gathering team members occurred easily and quickly. Similarly, in schools where there was strong administrative support, principals came to the teachers' classes and offered their own time to help the teacher during a difficult or crisis situation.

Thus the context of social support seemed to offer teachers a sense of reassurance and security where they felt that their needs would be taken care of. What was actually needed varied situation to situation and teacher to teacher and was translated into day to day practices the teachers perceived as helpful and supportive. This concept of multi-level support is important because teachers feel more confident and comfortable with inclusion when they know they can count on supports being in place (Janney et al., 1995b). Then, they are more likely to implement exemplary practices (Williams et al., 1990).

In contrast, lack of needed supports has the potential to translate into sources of stress and frustration for teachers (Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Soodak et al., 1998). Lack of situation specific supports may be symptomatic of a weak or compromised context of social support. For example, Laurie expressed that she was not comfortable asking special services staff for help because they would perceive her as a "problem

teacher who complains.” In her school environment asking for help was risk free only in the context of colleagues who were friendly with her.

When appropriate supports are not allocated teachers may construct hostile attitudes toward inclusion (Soodak et al., 1998). A concrete example of this was provided by Desiree who felt that the first year her school adopted an inclusive orientation, teachers were skeptical and apprehensive. They felt as though inclusion was just another thing that had to be done. But when support structures were put in place (e.g., half day of meeting time per month), she described the teachers as less defensive and more willing to try inclusion.

Administrative Support. A second key finding concerns the support provided by administrators. Administrative support was described as an administrator’s willingness to provide help in crisis situations, offer ideas, and facilitate the provision of needed supports. Administrative support has long been held a pivotal component of any system change effort (Calvin & Sprick, 1999; Sage & Burrello, 1994). Consistent with published research (e.g., Janney et al., 1995 a/b; Villa et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1990), teachers in the current study expressed that administrative support was critical in two ways. First, teachers looked to their building administrators to establish a leadership position on inclusion building wide (Janney et al., 1995a/b). The extent that this occurred was important to the extent that a building vision on inclusion existed and the degree to which there was a context of social support in place. Second, teachers appreciated and respected their administrator’s willingness to lend a helping hand and work directly with the student during difficult times and for finding the resources to provide other needed supports such as release time or space (Villa et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1990). Thus, in

doing this, the administrator was an important part of ensuring that teachers received the situational supports they needed and in a timely fashion.

In Class Support Personnel. In class support personnel were described as special education teachers, related services providers, and paraprofessionals who were assigned to work with the student in the study participants' classrooms. Similar to the experiences of teachers in Coots et al. (1998) and Gessler-Werts' et al. (1996a/b) studies teachers in the current study perceived in class support personnel as critical to the feasibility of inclusion and their success. In class support personnel provided teachers with a tangible way to balance the needs of their focus student with the needs of the class. Generally, paraprofessional in class supports were responsible for day to day implementation of academic and behavioral strategies. They were typically seen as the person responsible for intervening when occurrences of behavior surfaced during class time and for keeping the student engaged and on task. Using paraprofessional support in this way was consistent with other published examples, but does have the potential for problems (Brown, Farrington, Knight, Ross, & Ziegler, 1999; Giangreco, Broer, & Edeleman, 2001; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). The extent of teacher engagement with the student in the presence of a one to one aide is one concern raised by researchers investigating the role and responsibilities of paraprofessionals (e.g., Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Giangreco et al., 2001; Young, Simpson, Myles, & Kamps, 1997). For example, in a qualitative study investigating the characteristics of general education teacher engagement with students with disabilities, Giangreco et al. (2001) found that teachers who attributed responsibility to either paraprofessionals or

special education teachers were less engaged with the student being included than were teachers who attributed themselves as having primary responsibility.

Overall, teachers in the current study provided descriptions of active direct involvement and sense of responsibility for the student that were consistent with those of highly engaged general education teachers in published studies (e.g., Giangreco et al., 2001). In the current study the majority of teachers (11 out of 14) described themselves as the person primarily responsible for their focus student's educational program including the development of behavioral strategies, although most did not do this alone. These teachers all described themselves as being actively engaged with their focus student and provided examples of situations where they had intervened directly even in the presence of the paraprofessional or special education teacher. Such levels of engagement were likely important to both the sense of belonging the student felt in the classroom as well as the extent that peers perceived them as a member of the setting (e.g., Schnorr, 1990; Williams & Downing, 1998). Teachers in the current study expressed beliefs about the importance of forming relationships with their students and using intervention strategies that helped to promote the student's membership in the classroom. It is possible that the teachers' sense of responsibility and active direct engagement with the focus student were ways in which their beliefs were translated into day to day practice.

Conversely, the three teachers who attributed responsibility to special education teachers described themselves as less active in intervention design and direct implementation. Beatrice from Roosevelt Elementary expressed that she only directly interacted with Timmy when his aide was on lunch or a break. When the aide was present, Beatrice would step back and allowed the aide to be the direct interventionist.

Similarly, Debbie and Alice attributed responsibility to the special education teacher who was hired solely for their focus student. However, unlike Beatrice, Alice and Debbie did express feeling responsible for Kenny's educational and behavioral programs, just not primary responsibility. They also described themselves as having a participatory role in both the development and implementation of educational programs, including behavior support strategies, but to a lesser extent than teachers who felt they were primarily responsible.

A second less frequently discussed issue involving in class support personnel concerns the compatibility of the personnel involved. In the current study, teachers attributed the successful relationships they had with the in class support staff to the extent that everyone liked one another and used practices that were respectful of each person's contributions. Conflicts among personnel, particularly personality conflicts, were seen as detrimental to successful inclusion and for some teachers caused the emergence of struggles and frustrations. For example, it was frustrating for Alice when differences in opinions between the aide, herself, and the special education teacher occurred regarding how best to deal with certain situations. Bambara et al. (2001) had similar findings in that participants in their study of teams supporting adults with challenging behaviors expressed that conflict emerged when there were differences in opinions regarding how best to support the focus person. These types of interpersonal conflicts and the subsequent effects are less documented in the literature and suggest the need for future investigations to uncover how these conflicts emerge and the ways in which they can be prevented and resolved.

Positive Behavior Support

Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms has been a consistent and steady increasing trend during the last 10 years (23rd Annual Report to Congress, 2002). Likewise, general education teachers are now being asked to participate in education program planning for students with disabilities, including students who engage in challenging behavior. Because of this, general education teachers, like the teachers in the current study, are more regularly expected to participate in or are responsible for the design and implementation of behavior support plans. Because unwanted problem behavior may disrupt day to day classroom routines and adversely affect learning for the focus student and their peers, general education teachers need to employ practices that are effective and produce socially meaningful outcomes (Scotti et al., 1996). Positive behavior support offers one approach to help teachers more productively include behaviorally challenging students in general education classroom settings (Weigle, 1997). Dunlap et al. (2000) suggested that knowledge of person centered planning, functional assessment, team building, comprehensive intervention strategies and monitoring activities are all essential practices to implementing positive behavior support. In the current study, two teachers described themselves as having expertise in the area of behavior management, however, neither described themselves as knowing about or using positive behavior support. Not surprisingly, these two participants were trained special education teachers who had experience working with students who were behaviorally challenging.

Although none of the teachers interviewed described themselves as knowing about or practicing positive behavior support, the intervention practices they chose were

inherently positive, student centered, and designed to maximize participation in the general education classroom. Personal beliefs about classroom management and inclusion likely explain how this came about. Collectively, the teachers interviewed held very student centered classroom management beliefs. They emphasized looking at students from a strengths based perspective, building relationships, establishing expectations, and encouraging empowerment, all key aspects of positive behavior support (Anderson et al., 1996; Dunlap et al., 2000; Risely, 1996; Sugai et al., 2000). When it came time to plan specifically for their focus student these beliefs were translated into positive support practices that included environmental modifications, managing consequences, teaching appropriate social skills, and fostering relationships. Thus, the teachers intuitively chose intervention paths that were consistent with the beliefs and practices of positive behavior support.

Many people talk about the value base that underlies positive behavior support (e.g., Sugai et al., 2000). The findings in this study may suggest just how important a belief structure consistent with the PBS orientation is and how such beliefs can intuitively guide a teacher to using positive practices. However, holding a belief structure consistent with PBS does not necessarily ensure that the practices selected are the most effective or will result in the most meaningful outcomes. While the teachers used many practices consistent with positive behavior support, there were several practices absent that if used may have even further improved the degree of success they experienced. For example, none of the teachers discussed conducting a functional assessment or developing hypothesis statements about challenging behaviors. A few teachers mentioned that data was collected and in one situation (Melinda) there was a behavior specialist who was

responsible for conducting FBA's and directing data collection efforts. A few teachers discussed their need to understand why the child would act that way, but did not have a process for achieving such an explanation. While participants discussed teaching students skills to make them more socially appropriate, they did not select skills based on whether or not they functionally replaced the problem behavior. Additionally, no process was in place to conduct person centered planning. Person centered planning is a complimentary process to positive behavior support and can aid in forming an understanding of why problem behavior is occurring (Kennedy, Long, Jolivet, Cox, Tang, & Thompson, 2001; Wagner, 2002). Had teachers participated in person centered planning activities, particularly prior to actually including the student, they may have felt less apprehensive about including their focus student.

It is not clear why teachers in this study were able to identify positive practices to use with their students despite not having training in positive behavior support. One possible explanation for why teachers were able to identify interventions despite not having any training was the support they received from other members of the school community. Most, but not all of the teachers had opportunities to collaborate with professionals who had expertise in the area of special education. These individuals may have been instrumental in guiding the identify intervention strategies that were positive and proactive.

Essentially, positive behavior support synthesizes a process that may come naturally to some people, but for the most part school personnel need training to both apply the technology and understand that value set in which that technology is applied. Even when one has a value base consistent with positive behavior support it does

not assure that the strategies selected will be the most effective or meaningful. Dunlap et al. (2000) postured that conducting a FBA, engaging in person centered planning, designing hypothesis statements, proactive interventions, and teaching replacement skills are essential features of PBS that can influence the effectiveness of intervention strategies chosen. Aside from proactive interventions, the teachers in this study were unable to describe using practices consistent with these essential skills. Without training and adequate preparation school personnel risk using ineffective interventions or prolonging finding effective interventions through a lengthy trial and error process.

Findings in Relation to the Literature on Attitudes and Attitude Formation

The findings of the current study suggest the importance of understanding the contextual and personal predispositions that contribute to the development of attitudes about challenging students as well as the contextual supports that may be instrumental in changing those attitudes. Numerous research studies have provided descriptions of teacher attitudes toward inclusion (e.g., Block & Rizzo, 1995; Coots et al., 1998; Gessler-Werts et al., 1996 a/b; Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Janney et al., 1995 a/b), however, research needs to go beyond simply describing how teachers feel and begin to delve into why they feel that way, how those feelings developed, and if necessary the practices needed to change those feelings. The current study provides an opportunity to begin looking more deeply at these issues by describing the factors contributing to how attitudes were formed and transformed. The literature on attitude theory may help to explain why the combination of a social support context and situation specific supports are needed for teachers to feel supported. The literature on attitude

theory may also helped to explain why different teachers may need different kinds of supports.

A thorough discussion of the various theories describing the psychology of attitudes would require complex discussion beyond the scope of the current thesis. However, it is important to present some key theoretical principles of attitude formation and function. Generally, attitudes refer to a posture of the mind; a predisposition to an action one takes (Oskamp, 1991). Our past experiences and present attitudes influence the relations between observable stimulus events and our observable behavioral responses. We rely on our social cognition processes to help us gather information so that we can interpret and make sense of these stimulus events (Oskamp, 1991).

It is important to understand that attitudes serve different functions and why an attitude is adopted and the practices needed to change those attitudes will vary in accordance with the function it serves. According to Katz (1960), attitudes serve four major functions (a) knowledge, (b) need satisfaction, (c) ego defense, and (d) value expression. Numerous theorists have offered variations on this model (e.g., Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Bohnet & Wanke, 2002) with slightly different taxonomies but generally similar meanings. Three of the four attitude functions described by Katz (1960) appear particularly relevant to the findings in the current study. First, attitudes serve a knowledge or utilitarian function by helping us to understand and interpret what is happening by making sense of complex stimulus events. In the current study, when teachers were informed that they would be receiving their focus student, they attempted to assimilate knowledge of the focus student with what they knew about managing a class and meeting the needs of an entire class of students. Subsequently, many teachers

responded with skepticism and apprehension questioning how it could possibly work or whether they could meet the needs of the focus student and the needs of the entire class. Their attempts to make sense of the newly acquired information (i.e., including the focus student and their challenging needs) led them to question the feasibility of being successful. Most teachers responded to this by seeking out information about the focus student and or the nature of the student's disability. Their inquiry enabled them to feel more informed and prepared for what to expect of the student.

Second, sometimes referred to as an adjustment function, attitudes help us to satisfy our needs by adjusting to evolving scenarios and helping us to accomplish or attain desired outcomes. For some teachers in the current study, being successful including the focus student became motivating and rewarding to them when they received social recognition and praise from the student's parents, their colleagues, and administrators. For example, Mary from Polk Elementary recalled how a tearful phone conversation with John's parents motivated her to want to make inclusion successful for him. Teachers were also motivated by a sense of satisfaction they experienced knowing that the student was doing well. It was rewarding to them to see the student progress and experience success. They were proud of their accomplishments and knowing that they rose to the challenge of meeting their focus student's intense needs. The attitudinal outgrowth of this was a developing sense of confidence in their own ability to be successful with challenging students.

Third to enhance and protect our self esteem attitudes function as ego-defense mechanisms deflecting perceived potentially harmful stimuli. In the current study, teachers were quite humble about their contribution to their students' successes. When

problems occurred they were highly reflective and looked first to the environment and situational factors that could be the cause of why behavior was occurring. Teachers did not feel the need to defend their actions or protect their reputations because they were in environments where they felt comfortable to take risks and supported by the people around them.

It is easy to see how under different circumstances each of the attitude functions described could have created barriers to successfully including the focus students. Because of this it is important to understand the practices or approaches needed to stimulate attitude transformation. Meaning, practices to change attitudes may only be effective to the extent that they match the function of the attitude. When the function of the attitude is to understand, attitude change can be accomplished by presenting new information that is contrary to or expanding the teacher's existing beliefs (Katz, 1960). Such information (e.g., student strengths) might correct erroneous facts or point out facts that were previously unknown. This approach can be a simple, yet powerful change agent in school settings. For example, one of the situational supports teachers found helpful, particularly early on, was learning information about the student and the nature of their disability. Teachers discussed how helpful it was to learn about Autism and Asperger Syndrome and the characteristics typical to these conditions. They described themselves as better able to understand the child and make sense of peculiar behaviors that were occurring.

Changing attitudes that serve the function of satisfying a need is slightly more complicated in that the attitude holder must be dissatisfied with the attitude in question or sufficiently motivated by new needs or goals (Katz, 1960). In the current study, initial

apprehensions were transformed as teachers began feeling motivated by the success they were experiencing and from receiving social praise from parents, administration, and colleagues. Thus, applying the principals of positive reinforcement to teachers is an important strategy to encourage change in attitudes that are need satisfaction oriented. For example, Leslie appreciated when her principal gave her release time to leave early during times that were very difficult and stressful. The need for encouragement, praise, and celebration has been cited by teachers and direct service providers in other published studies (e.g., Bambara et al., 2001; Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Janney et al., 1995a York-Barr et al., 1992). Essentially, to transform adjustment or need satisfaction attitudes, the teacher needs to be sufficiently motivated either through intrinsic or external reinforcement. Thus, social praise, special privileges, and celebrations are simple strategies to encourage attitude change.

Ego defensive attitudes are difficult to change because they serve preservation functions. In order to change attitudes that serve an ego defensive function, the attitude holder must feel as though the threat which provoked the attitude in the first place has been removed (Katz, 1960). Thus, one approach is to create school building environments that encourage a collegial atmosphere where asking for help is risk free. It may also mean providing teachers with the situational supports needed to get through difficult times and struggles (e.g., Janney et al., 1995b; Smith, 1997; Soodak et al., 1998). As seen in the current study, teachers were comfortable and enthusiastic about their opportunities to collaborate and did not experience angst when they had to ask for help or for ideas from colleagues, administrators, or the student's parents. Thus, to change ego defensive attitudes administrators need to encourage collaboration, teaming, and a

collegial atmosphere where teachers are not afraid to reach out for help or to afraid that they will be perceived as failing or incompetent when problems arise.

When considering the function an attitude serves it is important to keep in mind that there is no clear concrete distinction among each of the functions described and that attitudes can serve multiple functions. Meaning, that a single attitude can serve multiple functions for an individual as well as for a group of individuals. For example, a group of teachers may be apprehensive about including a challenging student, but the reasons why (i.e., function) for each one can vary across individuals and can be the result of a combination of influences or reasons.

All teachers in the current study formed attitudes about including the focus student in their classroom prior to his arrival. The extent that the attitudes formed were those of confidence or apprehension depended on a number of contextual and personal predispositions (i.e., building vision, personal beliefs, degree of exposure). Findings from the current study suggest that teachers who did not have direct positive prior experiences were most susceptible to stories about their focus student's reputation for engaging in challenging behaviors and contributed to forming apprehensive attitudes.

Transformations from apprehension to confidence have been documented in several qualitative studies on inclusion (e.g., Giangreco et al., 1993; Hamre-Nietupski et al., 1999; Janney et al., 1995a/b). Findings from the current study provide additional evidence to support the need for teachers to have exposure to students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior to aid them in developing a greater sense of confidence in their ability to be successful. As might be expected a greater number of teachers in the current study expressed feeling apprehensive about

including their focus student. The four teachers (i.e., Ernie, Desiree, Melinda, and Peter) who expressed initial feelings of confidence attributed the formation of this attitude to their training and experience as special education teachers, prior experience with challenging behaviors, and in Peter's situation, his direct prior experience with the focus student. Ernie, Peter, Melinda, and Desiree all felt that their background in special education was instrumental in preparing them with the skills needed to include more challenging students.

The 10 teachers who did not have a special education background and who did not have experience with students this challenging expressed that after their experience including the focus student, they were confident and prepared to work with more challenging students. Thus, prior experience and training appear instrumental to the formation of initial impressions, while actual positive direct experiences appear critical to transforming teacher attitudes from apprehension to confidence. This suggests the importance of communicating positive information about the student so that a more favorable profile can be constructed. Helping school personnel to see a student's strengths can be a powerful agent in changing negative attitudes to positive attitudes.

In combination with a context of social support, degree of experience suggests two levels of possible intervention and support strategies for general education teachers. The first point of intervention should occur during preservice where course and field work may be helpful in exposing teachers to students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. Such preservice experience may help the teacher to feel less apprehensive initially and more open to the possibility of including challenging students. The second level of intervention would occur during service where, like the

teachers in the current study, they are supported while including a challenging student. Helping teachers to feel confident and comfortable including a challenging student maybe critical to the types of attitudes they form toward that student. When teachers perceived students as being too difficult, consuming too much of their time, or having detrimental effects on other students learning they maybe more likely to form indifferent or negative attitudes about the student (Cook et al., 2000; Cook, 2001).

Implications for Practice

This is the first study that richly describes the experience of general education teachers using positive practices to successfully include students with developmental disabilities, particularly students on the Autism Spectrum Disorder continuum, who engaged in challenging behavior. The findings not only offer promising practices by illustrating the situational and personal conditions present during the successful inclusion experience. The findings from the current study suggest two key implications for practice.

First, the findings suggest a complex pattern of attitude formation where teachers' dispositions and perception of socially constructed realities interacted to provide initial attitudes about including the focus student and then again to produce transformation of initial attitudes. Known as the social-information processesing approach (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) this phenomena suggests that teachers' attitudes were shaped by their experiences within the social context of the school building. As a result, systematic efforts focusing on the teacher and the social system may be required for successful attitudinal change to occur. It also suggests the fragile nature of sustaining constructive attitudes toward inclusion and students who engaged in challenging behavior, where

deterioration in the social support context will likely erode positive attitudes. In light of this emerging phenomenon it is necessary to pursue an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the complex patterns of attitude formation and change. Using the literature on attitude theory to interpret the findings, targeted practices can be identified that may encourage the development and sustainability of constructive teacher attitudes towards inclusion and students who engage in challenging behavior.

Second, the findings from the current study suggest a number of day to day practices to promote positive experiences for teachers including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. Teachers in the current study described a number of pre-inclusion and during-inclusion practices that served to either increase or decrease their apprehension. Overall, information sharing was perceived by teachers as an important part of their preparing for the student's arrival. Teachers appreciated opportunities to meet with the child's parents, prior teacher, and or professional staff to develop a better understanding of their likes/dislikes, strengths/needs, and strategies that worked/did not work. They also appreciated learning about the nature of the student's disability and what they could expect day to day from the student. Teachers who had the opportunity to observe the student in the previous class reported that it helped to reduce the ambiguity of what the student would be like in their own classroom. Similarly, teachers found it helpful when they knew a plan was in place to support the student (e.g., in class supports) and handle difficult or crisis situations. These are all key examples of practices to employ as a way of preparing teachers prior to the start of an inclusion experience that will also serve to decrease initial

apprehensions. Preparatory activities to help the teacher feel more comfortable and less apprehensive prior to the student coming to their class can be summed up as follows:

1. Prepare teachers by sharing strengths based information about the student.
2. Offer disability specific information for the teacher to read or workshops they can attend.
3. Encourage the development of a student-centered commitment to doing what is best for the student.
4. Create opportunities for the teacher to observe the student prior to the school year ending.
5. Reassure the teacher that they will not be alone and that they will have the supports needed to include the student.
6. Ensure that a plan is in place for in class supports and dealing with crisis situations.

Once the school year has begun, the types of practices needed shift from preparatory to supportive. The most important of these activities is the opportunity to collaborate in safe and supportive social contexts. Teachers needed to feel that asking for help would not stigmatize them or result in their competence being questioned. In the current study, asking for help or suggestions was risk free because of the collegial nature of the school building atmosphere. Regardless of whether collaboration occurred in formal or informal forums, teachers encouraged honest and open communication between themselves and collaboration partners as a way of preventing conflict from occurring. They also stressed the importance of everyone having a common commitment to doing what was best for the child. In combination with respecting their collaboration partners,

open communication, and a common commitment sustained productive partnerships.

Another important part of support for teachers was the availability of people to just talk with or share how they are feeling or to receive encouragement or reassurance.

When including challenging students, teachers needed encouragement, validation, and reassurance that they were meeting the student's needs and handling behavior problems well. Teachers in the current study found it helpful when colleagues or administrators would check in to just see how they were doing or to ask if they needed anything. These gestures reaffirmed to teachers that they were cared about and not alone. Teachers also needed to feel that they could trust their administrators to follow through on requests or that they would publicly support the teacher in conflictual situations. Essentially supports for teachers during inclusion can be summed up as follows:

1. Create an atmosphere where asking for help is risk free.
2. Check in with the teacher to offer help or just someone to talk to.
3. Create opportunities as needed for formal and informal collaboration.
4. Foster respectful interactions and positive interpersonal relationships.
5. Encourage, reassure, celebrate, and praise the teacher's efforts.
6. Follow through on requests in a timely fashion.

The findings from the current study suggests that providing support to teachers is as much about creating a pervasive culture of support within the building as it is helping a teacher through a specific difficult situation.

Cautions to Interpreting the Findings

While the findings from the current study are hopeful and suggest a number of important implications for practice and future research, they should nonetheless be view

in light of four sets of cautions. The first set of cautions concerns the nature of the interview study. Although several steps were taken to prolong engagement (i.e., series of three interviews, multiple member checks, and the focus group), the time spent with participants was limited. The interviews generally spanned a three to four week time period in the course of careers that spanned 5 to 36 years. Because teachers were interviewed over a brief period of time extraneous conditions that may have influenced their opinions at the time of the interviews cannot be accounted for. Meaning, for example, current conditions (e.g., a better or worse inclusion experience) could have distorted their memory of actual events. Additionally, because participants were being asked to recall past experiences, it is possible that there were nuances and details that they were unable to remember.

Finally, in depth interviews were the primary source of data in the current study. Because of this, it was not possible to corroborate data obtained with other sources such as the teachers' colleagues, student records, or observations. Whether other members of the building community would agree with the teachers' perceptions about building vision, administrative posture and support, in class supports and so forth is unknown. This concern is somewhat tempered, however, by the fact that for nine participants, multiple teachers were interviewed across three buildings (i.e., Roosevelt Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, and Eisenhower Elementary). In these situations it was possible to observe consistencies in responses. For the remaining five teachers, such triangulation was not possible.

One way to redesign the study to account for these possible sources of caution would be to interview teachers periodically during the school year as they were engaged

in the inclusion experience. Designing the study to follow teachers' experiences while the actual inclusion experience is occurring might provide a richer description of transformation and the factors contributing to those transformations. In addition, this would have allowed for observation of the focus student in the classroom situation which was not possible using the current study's methodology. Observations of the student may have further illuminated practices teachers used to support the student as well as the extent of direct engagement the teacher had with the student. Another benefit of interviewing teachers during the actual experience would have been the ability to observe the teacher as they collaborated with other members of the school community. Such opportunities could suggest additional supports and practices that teachers perceived as helpful as well as offer explanation for how the teachers went about designing interventions. Finally, participants would be more likely to recall nuances of situations that were fresh in their mind as opposed to experiences that happened a year or more earlier.

The second set of cautions has to do with the sample of teachers who were interviewed and includes (a) limited ethnic, grade, and geographic diversity and (b) recruitment criteria. First, although New Jersey is a very ethnically diverse state, with the exception of one African American teacher, all of the teachers interviewed were Caucasian. Teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be able to offer perspectives different from those of Caucasian teachers and thus should be actively recruited to participate in future studies such as this one. This may be particularly true if teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are from schools in urban and inner city areas where resources and supports may be greatly

restricted because of financial constraints faced by the district. When the school community is faced with multiple changes (e.g., community poverty, gangs and violence, drugs) and a restricted school budget, personnel may not have the resources to engage in practices perceived supportive by teachers in the current study. For example, a lack of substitutes may limit opportunities for collaboration or for sending the teacher out to inservices for training. High rates of transience in urban schools could also be problematic because students frequently enroll throughout the school so preparation for the student's arrival may not be possible.

Another possible caution with regard to the participant pool was that 12 of the teachers were female. The two male teachers interviewed had a much more difficult time expressing their need for support and describing the supports they found helpful in comparison to the female teachers. For example, both Ernie and Peter referred to administrators letting them do their job and not hassling them with paperwork and bureaucracy, which none of the female teachers mentioned. They appeared less inclined to express that they had support needs and how they were feeling while including their focus students. In comparison, the female teachers were much more expressive about their feelings and their needs. It seemed as though the male participants were less comfortable describing themselves in a compromised or vulnerable position. Because of this, the findings may be more reflective of the needs of female teachers. Future research will need to investigate whether male teachers have needs that are similar to or different from female teachers.

Another caution to interpretation is that 12 of the 14 teachers had their inclusion experience in New Jersey public schools. Because regional culture, state education

related regulations, and practice of inclusion varies widely across the country, teachers from other parts of the United States may have experiences different than participants in the current study. Another diversity related caution is that the teachers were in elementary schools and taught in grades ranging from first to sixth. It is unknown whether teachers of middle or high school age students or teachers of students with different types of disabilities (e.g., ADHD or Emotional and Behavioral Disorders) have experiences similar to that of the study's participants.

The recruitment criteria used should also be considered when interpreting the findings of the current study. The teachers were nominated based on whether they were perceived successful by gatekeepers and whether they perceived themselves as being successful with the student they were including. Purposefully selecting participants enables the researcher to explore a phenomenon that has been similarly experienced. The drawback to this approach is that the description may only transfer to teachers who also experienced success. It does not speak to the experiences of teachers who do not feel they were successful. As suggested in the next section of this chapter, investigation is needed that explores the factors contributing to unsuccessful situations. In doing this a more complete picture of including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior can be constructed.

The third set of cautions concerns the potential for researcher bias when conducting qualitative research as a lone researcher. The extent that the findings reported are accurate reflections of participants' experiences is tempered by the extent that I was able to hold presuppositions separate from the experiences of the participants. A number of steps were taken to prevent the influence of research bias and includes a multi-level

member check process, peer debriefing, and writing memos. At the start of the study I recorded my biases and reported these on page 70 of the current document. These presuppositions were routinely reviewed and reflected upon throughout the study. Interestingly enough, not all of the presuppositions were consistent with the participants' realities. For example, I believed that the general education teachers would have received more support from a special education teacher than they actually did. In some situations special education support was readily available (e.g., Lincoln Elementary, Roosevelt Elementary, and Adams Elementary) but in other situations (e.g., Eisenhower Elementary and Jackson Elementary) the teachers rarely if ever received support from or collaborated with the special education teacher. I also believed that systems level barriers would have been perceived as sources of struggle and frustration for the teachers, but in actuality, funding for in class supports was the extent of systems level issues that were discussed and that was brought up by only three teachers.

Several of my biases were consistent with the findings obtained. For example, the researcher believed that the teachers would have had frequent and positive contact with the student's parents. Generally, this was true, but teachers were also very descriptive about frustrations they experienced with the focus student's parents and parents of other students in the class. Consistent with my presuppositions, teachers used an informal problem solving approach to behavior support that was characterized by frequent discussions and trial and error implementation of interventions.

Upon reflection one bias that was not initially recorded was my belief that positive behavior support is an effective approach to supporting students who engage in challenging behaviors. Because my belief in positive behavior is so strongly held, it is

possible that it influenced the way I collected and interpreted the data. For example, I may have neglected to ask questions that could lead to information contrary to positive behavior support or inclusion. Similarly, during data analysis I may have overlooked data that would suggest the teachers used practices that were inconsistent with a PBS orientation. It is also possible that I may have interpreted things the teachers were doing as consistent with PBS because I was invested in finding evidence to support my bias.

Directions for Future Research

A full discussion of the findings would be incomplete without the advancement of future lines of inquiry. The findings stimulate a number of research questions for both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. First, future research will need to more thoroughly explore the nature and influence of contextual and personal predispositions on the formation and transformation of attitudes. For example, it would be helpful to better understand the role “types of information provided” and “prior experiences” plays on attitudes teachers form toward students. By investigating whether general education teacher attitudes differ toward students with disabilities who engaged in problem behavior as a function of the types of information they receive about a student and the type of prior experience they have had with challenging students will help to further clarify practices to promote positive attitudes.

Second, the findings suggest the need to explore and validate the theoretical processes of attitude formation for teachers including students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. Research efforts will need to empirically validate the relations between functions of attitudes and practices to produce attitude change. Inquiry will also need to focus on the practices needed to catch and

remediate social processing errors. Finally, empirical validation of the framework suggested by the findings is required.

Third, future research is needed to describe the experiences of teachers who were not successful with students with developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. Because only successful teachers were included in the current study, the picture is not yet complete. It will be important to understand (a) the types of attitudes held by teachers who have had poor or unsuccessful experiences, (b) whether those attitudes are similar to or different from teachers who are successful, (c) the factors that contributed to forming those attitudes, and (d) the extent that a similar or different context of social support is in place.

Finally, a more vivid description of the context of social support is needed. It might be helpful to identify schools that are nominated as exemplary models of including students who engage in challenging behaviors and then profile these schools through multiple methods (observation, interviews, surveying) to better describe how a culture of support is cultivated and maintained.

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APPENDIX A

September 15, 2003

Dear ,

My name is Sharon Lohrmann, I am an Instructor of Pediatrics at the Elizabeth M. Bogg's Center on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Medicine and Dentistry-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and a doctoral student at Lehigh University. Currently I am working on my dissertation study. The purpose of the study is to interview regular education teachers who have been nominated as a teacher of excellence by a member of their school or local community. If you have received this letter, then someone in your district considers you to be a model of excellence in the area of inclusion.

I am interested in interviewing you regarding your experiences including a student with a developmental disability who also has a history of engaging in difficult or challenging behaviors. I have included a study description and consent form for your review. Your name, the name of the child, and the name of the school are not used in the final report. Everyone is assigned a pseudonym. I come to a location and at a time convenient to you, most teachers opt for me to come to the school at the end of the day. We meet on three occasions and the interviews last between 30-90 minutes.

I look forward to having the opportunity to talk with you. I hope you will consider participating in this study so we all can learn from your experience and example. If you are interested you can reach me at 908-537-7340 (evening), 732-235-9306 (day) or by email at sharon.lohrmann@umdnj.edu

Sincerely,

Sharon Lohrmann
Instructor of Pediatrics
Elizabeth M. Bogg's Center on Developmental Disabilities
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

APPENDIX B

STUDY DESCRIPTION

General education classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse learning centers. During the past decade there has been an emphasis on the importance of students with severe developmental disabilities becoming members of general education classrooms. Many school districts have begun to create programs where students with severe developmental disabilities are receiving their education and supports within the general education classroom. With this opportunity for students with severe disabilities to be included, general education teachers are finding themselves teaching and supporting students with more significant needs than ever before.

One variable that may place the inclusive opportunity in jeopardy is the extent that the student engages in behavior that is considered problematic or unacceptable in the general education classroom. These behaviors may be considered disruptive to the learning atmosphere or a threat to the safety of the student or others in the classroom. Despite the occurrence of challenging or problem behavior, many general education teachers have successfully been including students with such intensive needs in their classes. The experiences of these successful teachers may offer lessons that others can use to create successful inclusion experiences for students with severe developmental disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of general education teachers who have been successfully educating students with severe disabilities who engage in challenging behavior in their classroom by participating in the design and implementation of a behavior support plan.

General education teachers who are interested in participating in this study will be asked to participate in three ways. First, teachers will participate in three private, audio taped interviews spaced approximately one week apart. It is anticipated that these interviews will last between 30 and 90 minutes. The interviewer will facilitate the interview using a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit discussion about the teacher's experiences with the student.

Second, participants will also be asked to respond to written summaries of both their own interviews and the collective findings of the study. Third, all participants will be invited to a focus group meeting at a mutually agreed upon place where all participants will have a chance to meet one another, listen to a brief presentation of the study's findings and then comment on their impressions of the findings. Comments, clarifications, and extending information provided by participants at this focus group meeting will then be incorporated into a final report.

Information from all participants will be kept confidential. This will be accomplished by changing the names of the participants, the focus student they are talking about, and the school district where they work.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this study, please contact Sharon Lohrmann at 908-537-7340 or by email sharon.lohrmann@umdnj.edu.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TEACHERS

I, _____ agree to participate as a subject in the investigation on general education teachers' experiences working with students with developmental disabilities who engage in problem behavior directed by Sharon Lohrmann, a doctoral student in special education under the direction of Dr. Linda Bambara, Associate Professor of Special Education and dissertation committee chair.

It has been explained to me that the general purpose of this study is to understand the first hand experiences and meaning general education teachers have as a result of including a student with a developmental disability who engages in challenging behavior in general education settings.

I understand that I will be asked to participate in three types of actives:

- Three face to face interviews spaced at approximately 1-2 week intervals with the researcher lasting between 45-90 minutes;
- Written comments on reports summarizing my personal comments from the interviews and a draft of the findings developed by the researcher;
- Participation at a focus group meeting that will involve all participants in the study at which time the researcher will present the findings and ask for comments.

I understand that each of the interviews will be taped recorded for no purpose other than to accurately collect data. I am aware that the audio tapes will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher and the dissertation committee chair (Linda Bambara). I understand that the audio tapes will be destroyed following the development of a final report. I understand that in no way will the audio tapes be used to evaluate my teaching performance or effect my employment at my school district. I understand that being audio taped may make me feel uncomfortable, however I am aware that I can listen to the audio tapes and request to not be tape recorded at any given time.

I understand that I may feel that the time required to participate is intrusive on my schedule. However, I understand that interviews will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to me and that I may request to end or cancel an interview or my participation in the study at any time.

I understand that I may feel uncomfortable or would prefer to not answer some questions. I understand that if this occurs I have the right to decline to answer a question or I may request to have statements removed from the data base if I am not comfortable with it. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time if I feel my participation may lead to unanticipated repercussions.

I understand that all data will remain confidential with regard to my identity and the identity of my school district.

If I have any questions about this study and what is expected of me, I may call Sharon Lohrmann at (570) 348-6289. Problems that may result from my participation in this study may be reported to Ruth L. Tallman, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Lehigh University at (610) 758-3024.

I have read the above information and I hereby consent to participate in the scientific investigation described.

Date

Signature of Participant

I the undersigned, have defined and full explained the investigation to the subject above.

Date

Signature of Researcher

I was present when the study was explained in detail to the participant

Date

Signature of Witness

APPENDIX D

ORIGINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTION

Interview 1

1. Prior to becoming a member of _____'s educational team, what was your exposure or experience with individuals with severe disabilities?
2. How would you describe yourself as a teacher prior to having _____ included in your classroom?
3. Prior to having _____ in your class, how would you describe the building culture towards inclusion?
4. Prior to having _____ in your class in what ways did you feel successful as a teacher?
5. Prior to having _____ in your class, were there frustrations you experienced as a teacher?
6. In what ways did you resolve or overcome these frustrations?
6. Prior to having _____ in your class, what did it mean to you to be a teacher?

Interview 2

1. What were your initial impressions when you realized you would be a part of _____'s educational team?
2. In what ways were you prepared for _____ to come into your class?
3. What is it like to have _____ in your class?
4. Describe for me the types of behavioral challenges you experienced with _____.
5. When the behaviors occurred, how did you know what to do?
6. Describe for me some of the day to day strategies you use when behavior occurs.
7. How did _____'s intervention plan come about.
8. In your opinion, do you feel _____'s inclusion has been a successful experience?
9. In what ways do you think it has been successful?
10. During the inclusion experience, were there particular things you needed in order to make it work?
11. What struggles did you face to include _____ in your class?
12. In what ways did these struggles effect day to day support of _____?
13. In what ways did you resolve or overcome these struggles?
14. What advice would you offer another general education teacher who was going to have a student with severe disabilities who engages in challenging behavior in their classroom?

Interview 3

1. Recall your initial impressions of _____, have these impressions changed since the time when you first had _____ in your class?
2. Last time we met, you discussed a number of strategies used to support _____ in your class. In what ways did these supports and intervention strategies change over time?
3. The first time we met you said that for you teaching meant _____. Reflecting on your experience with _____ does teaching now hold the same meaning?
4. Last time we met you described several things that were important for you to have in order to make the inclusion situation work. For example, you discussed _____. Why were these things important for you?
5. Last time we met, you discussed a number of struggles you faced while having _____ in your class. For example you discussed _____. Why were these things a struggle for you?
6. What sense did you make of the struggles and how you resolved or overcame them?
7. In what ways has the building culture changed since you first had _____ in your class? What do you attribute this to?
8. Were there things you learned about your personal or professional needs from the inclusion experience?
9. What personal or professional meaning did you derive from your experience?

APPENDIX E

REVISED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Interview 1

Examples of probes are in italics

1. Please describe for me your teaching position and experience prior to having _____ in your classroom?
2. How many years had you been teaching? What was your educational background?
3. How would you describe yourself as a teacher prior to having _____ in your class?
4. Prior to becoming a member of _____'s education team, what was your exposure or experience with individuals with developmental disabilities?
 - a. *What was your experience with students who engage in significant behavior problems?*
 - b. *Were these positive or negative experiences for you?*
5. Prior to having _____ in your class, what was your classroom management style?
 - a. *How do you view students in your class?*
 - b. *Describe what students at this age are like?*
 - c. *Why is it helpful to think about your students in this way?*
 - d. *What do you expect of your students?*
 - e. *How do they know what is expected of them?*
 - f. *Why is it important to have these expectations?*
 - g. *How would you describe your relationships with your students?*
 - h. *In what ways are students encouraged to get along with one another?*
 - i. *Why are these relationships important?*
 - j. *What responsibility if any do your students have for the management and running of the classroom?*
 - k. *Why do you feel this degree of responsibility is important?*
6. Prior to having _____ in your class, how would you describe the building culture toward inclusion and kids who engage in challenging behavior?
 - a. *What is your administrator's position / stance on inclusion?*
 - b. *In what ways did they demonstrate this stance?*
 - c. *How did teachers in your school feel about inclusion?*
 - d. *To what extent do you think there is a common building vision toward inclusion at your school?*

Questions for Interview 2

1. What were your initial impressions when you realized you would be a part of _____'s educational team?
2. What do you think contributed to your forming these initial impressions?
3. What if any, were your biggest worries about having _____ come to your class?
4. What types of stories or information did you have about _____ prior to their coming to your classroom?
5. How did these stories make you feel about _____ coming to your class?
6. What was the first week of school like with _____ in your class?
7. What was it like to have _____ in your class?
8. Describe for me the types of behavioral challenges you experienced with _____.
9. What was difficult about including _____?
10. What types of struggles or conflicts did you experience while including _____?
 - a. *What, if any, conflicts did you have with parents?*
 - b. *What, if any, conflicts did you have with other professionals?*
11. In what ways, if any, did these struggles affect day to day support of _____?
12. In what ways were these struggles resolved?
13. Who were people that were helpful or supportive of you while including _____?
 - a. *What did they do that you felt was helpful?*
14. In what ways, if any, were you prepared for _____ to come to your class?
15. To what extent has your principal or central administration been supportive of your personal efforts to include _____?
16. When behaviors would occur, how did you know what to do?
17. Describe for me some of the day-to-day strategies you used when behavior occurred?
 - a. *Why did you select _____ as an intervention to try?*
 - b. *How did you respond when behavior occurred?*
 - c. *Why was helping _____ to have friends important?*
 - d. *Why did you teach the student _____?*
18. How did these strategies come about?
19. Who was responsible for designing behavioral interventions and strategies for _____?
20. What guided intervention development and the strategies you selected?
21. How effective do you think these strategies were?

Questions for Interview 3

1. Recall your initial impressions of _____, in what ways did these impressions change over time?
2. Upon reflection what do you think were the most important influences on the initial impressions you formed of _____?
3. What do you think were the most important influences on helping you to feel more _____ about including _____?
4. To what extent do you think that direct experiences including a student like _____ is pivotal to the types of initial impressions teachers form about a student?
5. To what extent do you think the overall building culture is influential on the types of attitudes a teacher forms toward a student like _____?
6. To what extent do you think there was a context of social support at your school?
 - a. *Why is this important for teachers?*
7. What are your feelings about when inclusion may or may not be appropriate?
 - a. *Why or what makes you feel this way?*
8. In what ways did your beliefs or perceptions about inclusion change as a result of including _____?
9. In what ways do you think you grew as a person or a professional as a result of including _____?
10. What meaning did you derive from including _____?

APPENDIX F

October 10, 2003

Dear ,

Recently I came out to your school to interview you about your experiences including _____, a student with _____ in your classroom. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for participating in this research study. Your contribution is highly valued.

After we met, I transcribed the interview word for word and read it many times very carefully. I really tried to think carefully about what you were saying to me so that I could understand your perspective. At this time I am asking for you to review a summary of your interview and comment on the extent that you either (a) agree, (b) disagree, or (c) would like to add further comments or clarification. The summary is organized into key areas that are in all caps and bold font. Under each area heading is a narrative summary of your comments. I used key phrases, in bold, to try and capture in a few words the essence of what you were telling me. Next to each section is a box containing three options: agree, disagree, and comments on back. Please check whether you agree or disagree. If you want to make comments on the back or on a separate page, please check the comments on the back option so I know to look for them. I would also ask that if you disagree with something that you comment on why or clarify what you meant. I want to make sure that I am accurate in understanding what you said. As you read the summary try to think about how you felt then as opposed to how you feel now.

I am asking that you return the summary by November 10, 2003. I have enclosed a self addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

It was a pleasure to come and meet you and talk with you about your experience with inclusion. I greatly appreciate the time you have dedicated to helping me with this research study. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to reading your comments. Best of luck,

Sharon Lohrmann
Instructor of Pediatrics

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE SECTION OF A MEMBER CHECK

**What were the contextual and personal predispositions
toward inclusion and students who engage in challenging behavior?**

Building Vision

"It's an amazing learning environment"

"Meeting the individual needs of the children is really the ultimate goal of this building."

"I think having everyone on the same page in the building and sharing that philosophy of 'you do what's right for the kid' is important."

Mary spoke enthusiastically about the learning environment at Polk Elementary. She felt it was a place where everyone believes that it is important to do what is right for each child. She described the mission of Polk Elementary as meeting the individual needs of children by using diverse learning opportunities and instructional strategies. This is so important to the teachers and administration that according to Mary, "if you slip up and you do the one-size fits-all type of thing, you'd find out very quickly that it's not accepted."

She described Polk Elementary as a non-competitive non-comparative environment for students and adults. She believes this is important because it stresses the student centered nature of the building culture where everyone has something important to offer and that it is each person's unique contributions that makes Polk Elementary whole. The building vision of inclusion and student centeredness contributed to teachers feeling comfortable including challenging students. For Mary, it was "wonderful to know that everyone is always welcome."

According to Mary, "As long as you can argue whatever you're doing is in the best interest of the child, then you're fine." In her opinion, the level of student centeredness and vision created a very relaxed atmosphere where teachers were comfortable taking risks and trying instructional/intervention strategies that were progressive and nontraditional.

Beliefs about Classroom Management Practices

1. Strengths Based

"It can be a real turning point for kids. The curriculum starts to pick up, the pace of things starts to pick up. There's a lot of expectations and I think that trying to keep it fun and light and exciting keeps them excited about learning."

Agree	Disagree	Comments on Back

"No matter how silly, no matter how goofy – whatever it takes to help them learn is how would describe myself."

"I think it's a beautiful thing when you go out on the playground and see all different kids from all different backgrounds, all different financial levels, all different everything mixed up and mingling and being friends with each other. It's beautiful."

Mary speaks fondly of her students and describes a genuine appreciation and respect for the diverse backgrounds that her students bring to the classroom. She feels that because her class is so diverse, it is more representative of our world. Mary described designing instruction so that it builds off of her students' strengths and preferences. She described herself as a "goofy" teacher who is lively and enjoys having fun with her students. Mary has a deep understanding of her students' needs and appreciates where they are developmentally. She feels that this age can be a real turning point for kids because there is an increase in expectations and curriculum. By keeping class fun and lively her students stay excited about learning and are better prepared to meet higher expectations.

2. Consistent Expectations

"It's so important for the kids to understand why they're doing what they're doing, not just that they don't do it. Hopefully that'll translate into a life skill."

"I try to keep my discipline consistent so they know what to expect."

"In order to help everyone accomplish their own personal hopes and goals, I ask the students 'what do we need?' and this is where our rules come from."

Agree	Disagree	Comments on Back

A second important component of Mary's classroom management style is the establishment of consistent behavioral expectations. First, Mary described a school wide "No-More-Bullies" program implemented at Polk Elementary. According to Monica, the heart of this program is teaching students how to be socially appropriate and how to get along with one another. She feels that it is important for students understand what they're doing and the reasons why they are doing it. She does not think it is helpful to just tell a student to behave a certain way without explaining the reasons why so they can better understand the implications of their actions. Mary feels that it is important for her to be consistent with her students so that they know what to expect. Because the school environment is non-competitive, non-comparative she feels it is important to have individual expectations for her students and not group them together, but on a whole she expects high things from all of her students.

To establish expectations, she has a discussion with the class at the beginning of the year. She asks them what their goals and dreams are for the year and then asks them what they need in order to achieve their hopes and dreams. The "needs" students have are then translated into classroom rules that will allow everyone to accomplish their own hopes and goals. When Mary does have to respond to occurrences of problem behavior her

approach is to lower her voice and try to quickly get a sense of what it is that is bothering the student.

3. Fostering Relationships and Rapport

"My biggest thing is that I try to establish rapport with the kids right from the get go."

"I pride myself on knowing them not only inside of the classroom but outside of the classroom as well. It's not untypical to go to a ball game or a Communion on Saturday, all sorts of functions outside of school. I think because the home-school connection is huge."

Agree
Disagree
Comments on Back

According to Mary building rapport and relationships with her students is critical to preventing discipline problems from occurring. She makes her best attempt to get to know each of the children as well as possible. She believes that her students know that she cares for and loves them and that this is a foundation for her classroom environment. She says that is common for her to go to special events for her students such as ballgames and Communions and feels that this level of commitment lets the child know that you are there for them.

She emphasizing the importance of both her relationship with her students and the relationships students have with one another. She feels that the strategies used in the "No-More-Bullies" program have been important to building student to student relationships. She spends time teaching students about what it means to respect one another and how to handle conflicts.

4. Encouraging Student Empowerment

"They are expected to take responsibility for their action both good and bad."

"They do take a big portion of that upon themselves. You always hope that if we were out sick, the kids could run the room."

"It's a very child-driven classroom and school"

Agree
Disagree
Comments on Back

The fourth component of Mary's classroom management style is to encourage empowerment in her students. Mary describes Polk Elementary and her classroom as being very child-driven. She attributes this to the building leadership and the student centered culture of Polk Elementary. Students in Mary's classroom are expected to take responsibility for their actions as well as their learning. Examples of ways students are empowered include student led parent-teacher conferences, managing routines, cleaning the classroom, goal setting and monitoring, and organizing materials.

APPENDIX H

October 21, 2003

Dear ,

Once again I would like to thank you for participating in the interview study about general education teachers' experiences including challenging students. Recently you received a summary of your interviews. Thank for returning them so promptly, it is greatly appreciated. If you have not had a chance to return your summary yet, I am looking forward to your comments.

You may recall that a focus group meeting was being planned for November. This meeting gives you an opportunity to come together as a group, meet one another, hear about the study's findings, and have an enjoyable meal catered by a local restaurant.

I hope you will be able to join me:

Date: November 10, 2003
Time: 5:30-7:00 pm
Location: Franklin Township Elementary School

Please respond by November 3 to let me know if you will be able to attend or not as I will need to give an accurate head count to the caterer. You can reach me during the day at 732-235-9306 or in the evening at 908-537-7340.

I am looking forward to seeing you and sharing a meal while we talk about the very interesting findings from this study.

With much appreciation and admiration,

Sharon Lohrmann

APPENDIX I

November 12, 2003

Dear

This is the final step in your participation of the study I have been conducting regarding teacher support needs when including students with developmental disabilities who are behaviorally challenging. The enclosed report provides a summary of the overall findings. This report integrates the information obtained from all 14 teachers who participated.

Once again I am asking you to read the summary and indicate if you agree, disagree, or would like to make additional comments. Like your individual summary, there is a box next to each section where you can check off your response and lines on the back if you wish to make comments. The report is organized in the following way:

1. Overall summary of findings.
2. What were the contextual and personal predispositions toward inclusion and challenging behavior?
 - a. Building vision
 - b. Degree and type of exposure to challenging behaviors
 - c. Type of impressions formed
3. What was the social context of support for teachers?
4. What happened when the teachers included their focus student?
5. In response to struggles, what supports and practices were used to support the teacher and the focus student?
 - a. Situation specific supports for the teacher
 - b. Interventions for the focus student
6. In what ways did teachers change as a result of including their focus student?
7. Upon reflection, how do teachers feel about inclusion?

You will notice that each section begins with quotes. You may or may not recognize something you said. Every effort was taken to ensure your confidentiality. Schools have been renamed generically (Presidents of the United States) and should not be associated with a school you know with a similar name. I am asking that you return the summary within two weeks. This will allow me to complete writing the thesis and move to a highly anticipated defense date.

I am grateful to you for your contribution and insights, you have offered valuable guidance and much to think about. I wish you the very best in all you do.

Sharon Lohrmann
Instructor of Pediatrics

APPENDIX J

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings from the current study suggest a conceptual framework for understanding teachers' experiences including students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors. Teachers discussed a number of factors that contributed to the formation of initial impressions about the focus student including (a) the building vision toward inclusion, (b) their own personal beliefs about classroom management, and (c) the degree and type of prior exposure they had to challenging behaviors. Although they were apprehensive, teachers attributed their sense of reassurance that they would be supported to a context of social support where there was a general practice of inclusion building wide, a positive administrative posture toward inclusion, consistent in class supports, and a collegial atmosphere among personnel.

While teachers enjoyed success with their student, they did encounter day to day struggles and frustrations. In the face of these struggles, members of their social support context were instrumental in providing the teachers with situation specific supports which in turn allowed them to design and implement interventions and supports for their focus child. Their inclusion experience could be characterized as a dance where the provision of supports for both the teacher and the student ebbed and flowed as needs presented themselves. Ultimately, teachers felt that their inclusion experience with the focus student helped them to grow as a professional and also served to change or validate their perspectives of inclusion. The findings within this framework are organized according to six key questions (a) What were the contextual and personal predispositions toward inclusion and challenging behavior?, (b) What was the context of social support?, (c) What happened when the teacher included the focus student?, (d) In response to struggles, what supports and practices were used to support the teacher and the focus student?, (e) In what ways did teachers change as a result of including the focus student?, and (f) Upon reflection how do teachers feel about inclusion? Each layer of this framework will now be described in rich detail.

**What were the contextual and personal
predispositions toward inclusion and challenging behavior?**

Several contextual and personal predispositions toward inclusion and challenging behaviors contributed to the types of initial impressions teachers formed following their being informed that the focus student would be coming to their classroom. These predispositions or influences can be conceptualized as three overlapping components (a) a common building vision toward inclusion, (b) personal beliefs about classroom management, and (c) the degree and type of exposure to challenging behaviors and students with developmental disabilities. Each of these contextual and personal predispositions exerted influence through interaction with one another that led to the types of initial impressions teachers formed about their focus student's inclusion in their classroom. Each of these will now be described

Building Vision

"I think having everyone on the same page in the building and sharing that philosophy of 'You do what's right for the kid' is important."

When discussing their inclusion experience, teachers referred to the extent that there was culture of inclusion at their building. All teachers described their sense that some degree of a common vision toward inclusion existed at their school. An inclusive school vision was characterized as a commitment to welcome all students and to meet the needs of each individual child. A building vision of inclusion was important to teachers because it provided a sense of unity and cohesiveness where everyone in the building was on the same page regarding inclusive practices. For teachers in the current study, building visions described fell along a continuum of some inclusion happening to "Everyone here does inclusion."

Agree _____
Disagree _____
Comments on Back _____

Personal Beliefs about Classroom Management

- ☐ *"I find that by focusing so much on the positive, it really eliminates a lot of the negative."*
- ☐ *"I think it's a beautiful thing when you go out on the playground and see all different kids from all different backgrounds, all different financial levels, all different everything mixed up and mingling and being friends with each other. It's beautiful."*
- ☐ *"You have to set expectations and you have to set them high because they're just learning to deal with everything that's around them. And if you don't have expectations, then they go nowhere."*
- ☐ *"You really have to like children and you have to want to believe in them."*
- ☐ *"It's a very child-driven classroom and school."*

The second component of contextual and personal predisposition was the sense that teachers created proactive and student friendly classroom environments where they strived for all children to feel safe, loved, and welcomed. Their day to day classroom management practice was characterized by four common approaches (a) looking at students from a strengths based perspective, (b) establishing consistent behavioral expectations, (c) fostering rapport and relationships, and (d) encouraging student empowerment. Teachers described their classrooms using descriptors such as "family" and "community" emphasizing their own autonomy to create environments that were welcoming and inclusive regardless of the overall building vision of inclusion.

Agree _____
Disagree _____
Comments on Back _____

Degree and Type of Exposure to Challenging Behaviors

- ☐ *"Each time it is a learning experience because the next student you say, 'Okay, I dealt with this before.' When it was all new when it first happened you're like, 'Oh my God. What do I do?' And tearing your hair out until you figured out what worked. And then you got another student that was very similar or had problems in some ways similar to the other student, you use those skills that you worked out*

with the previous child.”

- *“They come with the reputation. It makes me feel more apprehensive. It may make some people feel more comfortable because now they know about it. But I think for the most part it makes everyone a little more apprehensive.”*

Thus far teachers described functioning within the context of an inclusive building culture where they created classroom environments grounded in their own personal beliefs about classroom management. A third influence on the formation of teachers’ initial impressions of including the focus student was the degree and type of prior exposure teachers had to general education students and or students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors. Degree and type of experience was characterized by (a) their own direct prior experience and training and (b) indirect exposure through student reputations and teacher stories. Prior exposure to inclusion and students who engage in challenging behavior appeared pivotal in teachers’ description of the attitudes they formed. Generally, the more positive prior experiences a teacher had the more confident they were about including their student. For example, four teachers interviewed were certified special education teachers. Two of these teachers had experience with students with emotional and behavioral disorders, while one teacher had experience including students with Autism, and the fourth had prior experience working directly with his focus student. All four of these teachers described feeling confident and were less concerned than teachers with no experience about including their focus student. The other ten teachers all expressed feeling apprehensive about including the focus student. They worried about the impact the focus student would have on their classroom atmosphere, their ability to maintain control of the class, and whether they would be able to meet the focus student’s needs. Because these teachers did not have a similar experience to draw from it was not clear to them how inclusion with a student this needy and intense could work. Many of these teachers also expressed how stories about their focus student’s behaviors contributed to their sense of apprehension. Meaning, that when a teacher did not have an experience base to draw from and heard stories about how “violent” or “disruptive” the student was they formed

Agree

Disagree

Comments on Back

apprehensions about their own ability to be effective and whether inclusion was even appropriate.

Types of Initial Impressions Formed

- ☐ *"My feelings at the time, I'll be honest with you, I was afraid."*
- ☐ *"I felt very alone then, because, I didn't know anything about him."*
- ☐ *"I was worried that I wasn't going to be able to provide what he needed. It wasn't clear to me."*

Building culture, personal beliefs about classroom management, and the degree and type of exposure to inclusion and students who engage in challenging behavior were all described as influential on the types of impressions teachers formed about inclusion appropriateness and about including the focus student. Teachers with the most positive combination of influence (i.e., strong inclusive building vision, student centered class management beliefs, and prior positive direct experiences) described themselves as feeling confident and comfortable including their focus students. Teachers who described (a) weak building vision, (b) no direct or negative indirect exposure such as stories about the problem behavior, or (c) an indifferent administrative posture described themselves as feeling apprehensive and anxious about the impending inclusion experience. The resulting outcome was the expression by teachers of initial impressions or attitudes that spanned a continuum from confidence to apprehension.

What was the social context of support?

- ☐ *"Well if you don't have support from the top down, forget it."*
- ☐ *"Because everyone's going through it, you're learning together; you're stumbling together."*
- ☐ *"A lot of teachers saw the only solution to the problem as 'Get them out of the classroom.'"*
- ☐ *"I love it [in class supports]. I think it's great to have all the extra help in the room. I don't know what I'd do without it now. I've gotten so used to it. And the kids are used to it too."*

Despite feeling apprehensive, the teachers at Roosevelt, Johnson, Polk, Lincoln, and Adams expressed a sense of reassurance that there would be a support system in place to help them get through difficult times. The provision of needed supports was not a question for teachers at these schools. They felt confident from the moment they were informed that the student was coming to their class that there would be people who could provide them with support and assistance when needed. In contrast, teachers from Ford, Eisenhower, and Jackson did not describe the same sense of confidence that there would be people there to support them. In fact, one teacher said she felt very alone when she first found out about the focus student coming to her class. Coincidentally it was these same teachers who did not express as strongly that there was a collective vision of inclusion at their school. Additionally, while they felt positively about their administrators, they did not describe them as the active supports or inclusion leaders that teachers at Polk, Johnson, Roosevelt, and Adams did of their administrators. For example, when asked if there was ever a time where she felt like she needed something from her principal, this teacher responded "I didn't think he had anything to give me because to be honest with you, I think it was just as new to them as it was to me."

The context of social support was critical to helping teachers feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed when including students with developmental disabilities who engaged in challenging behaviors. Among the people who were described by teachers as pivotal to forming this context of social support included colleagues, their special education counterpart, the building principal and other administrators, and professional staff (e.g., school psychologists or social worker). Of particular importance was the posture their administrators took to support inclusion efforts, the general practice of inclusion building wide, the extent that there was an atmosphere of collaboration in their school, and the provision of sufficient and consistent in class supports.

What happened when the teachers included the focus student?

- ☐ *"He would go under the desk and lift up the whole table on his back. It was like, 'Oh my gosh. What have I gotten myself into here?'"*
- ☐ *"It's hard when you have someone that you have to deal with throughout the*

entire year who's adamantly opposed to inclusion, that's frustrating."

- ❑ *"We have situations now with parents complaining about 'That kid in the classroom is disruptive.' The regular education parent is concerned about their kid and they feel that the included student is hampering education of their children. And that's our biggest problem right now."*
- ❑ *"It just brings a smile to my face when I see him dancing down the hallway at the end of the school day. This is a child who used to cry and throw things and used to be so full with anger and now he's filled with joy."*

Regardless of their initial apprehensions, all of the teachers approached including their focus student with the intention that they would do the best job they could. Most teachers experienced an initial relief that the situation would not be as dire as they initially thought it might be. However, depending on the circumstances the success was not always immediate and occurred to varying degrees. For example, two teachers struggled throughout the first half of the year while waiting for their central administration to decide to hire an aide instead of piecing together part time staff. Because of staffing inconsistencies, both teachers questioned at times the extent that inclusion was appropriate for these two children. However, once the proper staffing patterns were in place, and they began to experience successes, these two teachers felt more positively about including their focus children. Often time the behaviors were a source of challenge and frustration for the teachers and had the potential to temporarily derail successful outcomes. Additionally, other circumstances (e.g., conflict among professionals or with parents) created stressors for the teacher that made inclusion temporarily uncomfortable or unpleasant. But in the end all teachers felt that inclusion was a positive and successful experience for themselves, their students, and the child being included. Often these successes were described as a motivator to teachers encouraging them to feel hopeful and develop a sense of confidence in their ability to include challenging students.

**In response to struggles what supports and practices
were used to support the teacher and the focus student?**

Agree

Disagree

Comments on Back

Situation Specific Supports for the Teacher

- *"It's imperative to know that when that bad day does occur you have some place to turn, some place to have a shoulder to cry on if need be."*
- *"We had inclusion meetings. I think they were every two weeks in the morning. The OT, PT, the nurse, the aide, myself, and the resource room teacher would get together at a table and ask, 'Are there any problems? How can we over come them?' And they would help me."*
- *"She demands 110% but gives you 120% herself all the time so you know you have that kind of support. And I think that just trickles through everything."*
- *"We were able to go and visit at the other school, talk to previous teachers, find out how things went and what kind of modifications or expectations you could have."*

Agree _____
Disagree _____
Comments on Back _____

When teachers began the direct experience of including their focus student, they were faced with challenges that created frustrations and stress. When this occurred, teachers relied on the network of social support that existed in their building to provide them with specific instances of support and assistance. The most frequently discussed supports included having someone to talk to, collaboration opportunities, administrative support, parent support, and disability awareness activities. Situation specific supports made it possible for the teachers to attend to the needs of their focus students. The types of supports provided were guided by the teachers' personal and professional needs and varied teacher to teacher.

Interventions for the Focus Student

- *"I think it took a long time, just like with the regular children, to understand him, to understand the personality, understand his behavior. And then develop a rapport with him, what works, what doesn't work. I think it's a lot of trial and error. And so it definitely changed from the beginning to the end."*
- *"A lot of times we would be problem solving. Where we would see an issue come up in the classroom that we felt needed to be addressed. So we would talk about how that would be addressed."*

- ❑ *"The kids really took to him. They really went out of their way to help. They didn't make him feel different. They just always included him while playing."*
- ❑ *"You have to be willing to know and back off if you see that he's becoming frustrated. You have to look for warning signs and make sure that you're reading them correctly and not too late."*

All of the teachers interviewed discussed developing interventions for their focus child in response to problem behaviors. Generally teachers developed interventions based on their (a) beliefs about classroom management, (b) knowledge and understanding of the student, and (c) experience and intuition as a teacher. It was their core beliefs about supporting their focus student within the context of their beliefs as a classroom manager that allowed them to come up with interventions that were comprehensive (i.e., used combinations of intervention strategies such as antecedent interventions, relationship building, response strategies), practical, and proactive even though they did not have any formal training in positive behavior support. It was also the context of social support and the provision of situation specific supports to the teacher that created an atmosphere where they could get ideas from people who were knowledgeable about behavior intervention and felt comfortable taking the risk to try different strategies knowing that if those strategies did not work they would have the support to try something else.

In what ways did teachers change as a result of including their focus student?

- ❑ *"I guess I learned that it was possible to have successful inclusion. It was possible to work with other people. Any fears that I might have had whether they were conscious or otherwise are gone."*
- ❑ *"It changed in a positive way because I thought it was workable. It showed me that I can work with them without being trained. That as a regular school teacher I could work with a kid considered special ed."*

Initially, the thought of including the focus child in the classroom was worrisome to most of the teachers interviewed. They were concerned with their own ability to be successful, to provide the child what they needed, and questioned how it all would affect their classroom. Said one teacher, "I just didn't know it was going to work as well as it

did because I was hearing stories from a lot of my teacher friends from other places where maybe it hasn't." Once teachers began to have successful direct experiences with their focus student they developed more confidence in their ability. With direct experience, teachers began to find a sense of self-assurance that they would be fine working with the student and that they could provide their focus child with what they needed to have a successful school year.

According to one teacher she put her mind to making it work and said, "I can do this." Another teacher said, "This was a challenge for me. I feel that I can meet these challenges and feel comfortable about having a student like Timmy in my classroom, which I didn't know and never thought I would be able to do." Changes in their confidence and their willingness to include more challenging students stemmed from the successful direct experiences that they had. For example, the teacher from Polk said, "We did have a lot of successes so I think that confidence did come with the successes we had." A teacher from Lincoln also felt this way when she said, "We read a lot of books, go to seminars, and listen to people painting a picture of a perfect world. Where you have children included in class with various disabilities and they make it sound so easy and so perfect, and so doable." But in reality, it is not that easy and teachers derived a great deal of satisfaction from knowing that they made it work and that they would go back and do it again.

Agree _____
Disagree _____
Comments on Back _____

Upon reflection, how do teachers feel about inclusion?

- ☐ *"If you do as much as you can in the regular classroom in a regular school environment and it truly doesn't work, then yes, I think there are instances where the kid might have their needs better met elsewhere."*
- ☐ *"If the child has an outburst, crying, throwing a tantrum, throwing things. You're there by yourself and there is no personal aide, how can you possibly deal with that child and trying to protect other children from getting hurt. Because sometimes you don't know what they're going to do."*
- ☐ *"I think when it comes to the other children's safety, everyone's bodies and feelings deserve to be safe. And when the child is unable to control his or her temper or behaviors then you have to ask yourself, 'Is this the right setting for the*

Generally, the teachers interviewed felt very positively about inclusion. They held positive beliefs about inclusion and the valuable contribution students being included can make in the general education classroom. However, all of the teachers interviewed felt that there may be some classified students who engage in severely disruptive or dangerous behaviors not appropriate for the general education classroom. Said one teacher, "Some students maybe would not be able to function in a regular classroom. I don't know. Depending on the severity of their needs." According to another teacher, inclusion may not be appropriate, "When other children are feeling threatened. They're not feeling safe, the child is not progressing and it's actually doing more harm than it is good."

Another factor that influenced teachers' perception of appropriateness was the amount of time they needed to dedicate to a student. If a student demanded so much of their time and attention that it took away from the other students, their sense was that the general education classroom may not be the most appropriate place to meet that student's educational needs. This teacher echoed the sentiment of many of the teachers, when she said that at some point you have to "focus on what is right the kid [being included]" and balance that with the "rights and needs of the regular kids." Most teachers felt that some students had needs that were just too intense for the general education classroom and felt that there may be times general education is not the best choice for a student. Said a teacher, "I never had a mindset totally against it. I think it really depends on the situation. I still don't think that every single case is going to work."

Whether a student was considered appropriate or not had a lot to do with the extent that the appropriate supports were in place for the teacher and the student. A common example was when in class supports were lacking, inconsistent, or pieced together. Concerns about including students with significant behavior problems was tempered with the suggestion that it was okay as long as the proper supports (for teacher and student) were in place. Despite their concerns, the teachers interviewed felt that inclusion was a positive experience for themselves, their students, and the child being

Agree _____
Disagree _____
Comments on Back _____

included but would not make a blanket statement about whether inclusion was right for all kids. Generally it was felt that the appropriateness of inclusion depended on the individual student, what is best for him/her and what is best for the class as a whole.

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Education

M.Ed.	Special Education – 1994 Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA
B.A.	Psychology – 1991 Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ
Certified Teacher of The Handicapped	New Jersey

Professional Experience

- Instructor of Pediatrics: Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, 6/03 - present. Responsibilities include designing and implementing outreach programs on positive behavior support and conducting and disseminating research on positive behavior support in schools and with families.
- Assistant Professor: Marywood University, 9/00-5/03. Tenure track faculty position responsible for teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in special education, advisement, student teacher supervision, and scholarly activities.
- Technical Assistance Consultant: New Jersey Department of Education, 9/00- 5/03. Contractual part time consultant position entails providing technical assistance to the NJDOE on positive behavior support.

- Technical Assistance Consultant: Tri-State Consortium on Positive Behavior Support, 9/97 – 6/01. Contractual consultation position to provide technical assistance to school districts and intermediate units in the State of Pennsylvania. Responsibilities included facilitation and training district and intermediate personnel on the application of individual student system planning and school wide system planning to promote positive behavior change.
- Special Education University Supervisor: Lehigh University, 9/97-6/00. Position entailed coordinating and supervising internships for special education certification. Responsibilities included placing students in quality internship sites, monitoring portfolio development, and providing final evaluations for grade and certification.
- Research Scientist, Lehigh University, 6/92-5/97. Position involved administrative duties related to operating an adult service residential program (Lehigh Support for Community Living) affiliated with Lehigh University's College of Education.

Publications

- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Browder, D.M. (1998). Empirically based methods to assess the preferences of individuals with severe disabilities. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 103, 146-161.
- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Zirkel, P.A. (1998). The case law on aversive interventions for students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 65, 101-125.
- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., Sullivan, K.A., & Zirkel, P.A. (1998). [Review of the book The law and special education]. *West's Law Reporter*, 124, 787-792.
- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., Knoster, T., & Llewellyn, G.C. (1999). Screening for understanding: An initial line of inquiry. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 1, 35-42.
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- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., Knoster, T., & Llewellyn, G. (2000). School-wide positive behavioral support: Bangor school district's experience. *The Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions*, 2.
- Browder, D.M., & Lohrmann-O'Rourke, L. (2001). Promoting self determination in planning and instruction. In D.M. Browder *Inclusive life skills instruction*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Yurman, B. (2001). Innovative practices: Naturalistic assessment and intervention of mouthing behaviors influenced by establishing operations. *The Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 3, 19-27.
- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Gomez, O. (2001). Integrating preference assessment within the transition process to create meaningful school to life outcomes. *Exceptionality*, 9, 157-174.
- Bambara, L.M., Gomez, O., Koger, F., Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Xin, Y.P. (2001). More than techniques: Team members' experiences and perspectives on implementing positive supports for adults with severe challenging behavior. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 26, 213-228.
- Lohrmann, S. (2004). Anchor the boat: A classwide intervention to reduce problem behavior. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2, 113-120.

Selected Professional Presentations

- Lohrmann, S. (1996, November). *Environmental variables as predictors of activity preferences*. In L.M. Bambara (chair). Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Lohrmann, S. (1996, November). *Strategies for shared problem solving*. In L.M. Bambara (Chair). Paper presented at The at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Koger, F., & Lohrmann, S. (1997, March). *Strategies to assess and teach self-determination skills*: How to make it happen for adults living in community settings. Paper presented at the 18th Annual International Conference on MR./DD sponsored by the Young Adult Institute, New York, NY.
- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S. (1997, December). *Antecedent interventions for young children*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Boston, MA.
- Browder, D.M., & Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S. (1997, December). *Methods of preference assessment using nonsymbolic communication*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Boston, MA.
- Bambara, L.M., Gomez, O., Koger, F., & Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S. (1997, December). *The meaning of positive behavior support*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Boston, MA.

- Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., & Knoster, T. (1998, December). *Positive behavior support for students who challenge schools but who do not have severe disabilities*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Browder, B.M., Brown, F., & Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S. (1998, December). *Guidelines for systematic preference assessment: The search for meaningful outcomes*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Bambara, L.M., Gomez, O., Koger, F., & Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S. (1998, December). *Through the eyes of team members: The meaning of positive approaches*. Paper presented at The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Bambara, L.M., Gomez, O., Koger, F., Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., Xin, Y.P. (2000, December). *Paid relationships are important*. Paper presented at the TASH Annual Conference, Miami, Florida.
- Lohrmann, S. (2002, December). *The experiences of school teams embracing positive behavior support*. Paper presented at the TASH Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts.

Professional Affiliations

- American Association on Mental Retardation
- TASH
 - Positive approaches committee, Co-chair
- Council for Exceptional Children
 - Division for Early Childhood
 - Division on Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
 - Council for Children with Behavior Disorders