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# Inclusive Education For Students With Emotional Impairments: Factors For Success

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*Wayne State University,*

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**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS:  
FACTORS FOR SUCCESS**

by

**JESSICA COHEN**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2014

**MAJOR: SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Approved by:

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Advisor

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Date

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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my parents, Martha Sundermeier and Massoud Momeni, you always taught me to strive to be my best and to pursue my dreams. To my mom, you always showed me through example that hard work, dedication, and resilience do pay off. To my sister, Debbie, I thank you for years and years of “playing school” practice. You cultivated my love of teaching at an early age and supported me through my teaching career and endless schooling journey. To my sister, Lida, and my Aunt Pat, I thank you for always asking about my research and encouraging me to stick with it.*

*To my husband, Eric, I thank you for ever-present love and support. You saw me through the last two years in the program and encouraged me every step of the way. Our first date, engagement, and wedding took place during my dissertation writing. You kept me on track while also showing me how to create a work-life balance. And, now, as we await the birth of our baby girl, I am so glad you pushed me to finish! Thank you for being a wonderful husband and my perfect match in love and in life.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Significance of Study.....	7
Overview of Methodology.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Historical Perspective of Inclusive Education.....	11
Special Education: Separate and Unequal.....	12
Paradigms: What Makes it so Difficult to Change.....	14
The Building Blocks to Education: Rooted in Empirical Thought.....	15
Behaviorist Theory.....	16
Constructivist Theory.....	20
Inclusion and Student Achievement.....	24
Meeting Diverse Learning Needs in the Inclusive Classroom.....	26
Inclusive Teaching for Students with Emotional impairments: Setting the Stage for Success.....	29

Attitudes of Acceptance.....	29
Supporting Teaches and Students.....	30
Positive Behavior Support.....	31
Chapter Two: Summary.....	33
<b>Chapter Three: Design and Methodology.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Introduction.....	35
Research Questions.....	35
Research Paradigms.....	35
Ethnography in Qualitative Research.....	36
Ethnographic Research Paradigms.....	37
Research Design.....	38
Case Study Elements.....	39
Role of Researcher in Ethnography.....	38
Description of the Setting.....	39
Definition of Population and Sample.....	40
Participant Selection.....	40
Ethics and Protection of Participants.....	41
Data Collection.....	41
Formal Interviews.....	43
Observations.....	44
Field Notes.....	44
Artifacts.....	45
Informal Interviews.....	45

Fieldwork Journal.....	46
Data Analysis.....	46
Constant Comparative Method.....	46
Domain Analysis.....	47
Taxonomic Analysis.....	47
Trustworthiness.....	47
Credibility.....	48
Transferability.....	50
Dependability.....	50
Confirmability.....	50
Chapter Three: Summary.....	51
<b>Chapter Four: Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>52</b>
Introduction.....	52
Background of Student Participants.....	52
Background of Teacher Participants.....	62
Data Analysis.....	64
Initial Analysis.....	64
Analysis of Student Data.....	65
Common Themes in Informal Interviews.....	78
Domain Analysis from Informal Interviews.....	78
Taxonomic Analysis of Student Data.....	79
Analysis of Teacher Data.....	80
Themes from Teacher Interviews.....	83



Domain Analysis from the Teacher Interviews.....	83
Classroom Observations.....	84
Poetic Representation.....	86
Taxonomic Analysis of Teacher Data.....	88
Taxonomic Analysis of Combined Teacher and Student Data.....	89
Establishing Credibility with the Findings.....	90
Chapter Four: Summary.....	90
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings.....</b>	<b>92</b>
Introduction.....	92
Reflexivity in Research.....	92
Research Questions.....	93
Factors for Successful Inclusion of Students with Emotional Impairments.....	94
Grounded Theory.....	94
Barriers to Successful Inclusion.....	107
Summary.....	109
Lingering Questions.....	110
Implications for Future Research.....	111
Conclusion.....	112
Appendix A Parental Permission Research Informed Consent.....	113
Appendix B Oral Assent Form.....	116
Appendix C Consent Form for Teacher.....	118
Appendix D Principal Letter of Permission.....	121
Appendix E School District Letter of Permission.....	122

Appendix F Student Formal Interview Protocol.....	123
Appendix G Teacher Formal Interview Protocol.....	124
Appendix H Mainstream Note.....	125
Appendix I Student Informal Interview Protocol.....	126
Appendix J Student Final Formal Interview Protocol.....	127
Appendix K Teacher Final Formal Interview Protocol.....	128
References.....	129
Abstract.....	140
Autobiographical Statement.....	142

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Data Collection Schedule.....	43
Table 2: Conventional vs. Naturalist Criteria.....	47
Table 3: Participant Summary.....	53
Table 4: Shaun’s IEP Goals.....	55
Table 5: Summer’s IEP Goals.....	56
Table 6: Dustin’s IEP Goals.....	58
Table 7: Amelia’s IEP Goals.....	59
Table 8: Ben’s IEP Goals.....	61
Table 9: Student Perceptions About Mainstream.....	77
Table 10: Common Themes Across Informal Interviews.....	78
Table 11: Domain Analysis for Academic Success.....	79
Table 12: Domain Analysis for Behavioral Success.....	79
Table 13: Taxonomy: Student Perceptions of Being Included in General Education....	79
Table 14: Themes from Teacher Interviews.....	83
Table 15: Domain Analysis: Facilitating Inclusion for Students with EI.....	83
Table 16: Domain Analysis: General Education Teachers Feeling Comfortable with Inclusion.....	84
Table 17: Domain Analysis: Accepting Students with EI into General Education.....	84
Table 18: Themes from Classroom Observations.....	85
Table 19: Evidence of Student/Teacher Relationships in Classroom Observations....	86
Table 20: Taxonomy: Teacher Perspective of Including Students with Emotional Impairments in General Education.....	88
Table 21: PBS Traits and Coping Skills.....	104
Table 22: Student Awareness of IEP Goals.....	105

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Continuum of Education Placements.....	2
Figure 2: Percentage of Time Spent in General Education by Disability Category, Fall 2006.....	4
Figure 3: Percentage of Students ages 14-21 Who Dropped Out of School, 2006.....	5
Figure 4: Pavlov's Classical Conditioning Model.....	17
Figure 5: 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP Reading Scores, 2009.....	25
Figure 6: Gardner's Multiple Intelligences.....	26
Figure 7: PBS Elements.....	32
Figure 8: Taxonomy Representing Combined Findings.....	90

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Introduction

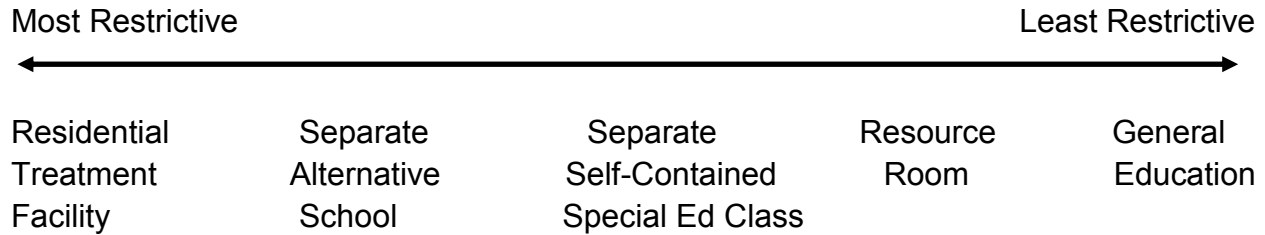
Special education policy and practice are ever evolving to best meet the needs of all students in an inclusive environment. Since the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) thirty years ago, students with special needs have moved from restrictive, exclusionary placements to being educated alongside their same aged non-disabled peers. As we move towards viewing special education as a service, not a place, including more students with disabilities in the general education setting and curriculum is becoming the expected practice in the majority of public schools in the United States (U.S. Dept of Education, 2007).

The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act defines fourteen federal disability categories: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, otherwise health impaired, specific learning disability, speech/language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (IDEIA, 2004). Once a student is found to have a disability that adversely affects their educational performance, special education services can be determined. Special education eligibility categories do not drive student placement. Based on individual need, students receive services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Least restrictive environment refers to placement where the student can, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated alongside their same aged peers.

On a continuum from most to least restrictive, placement for students with disabilities generally follows this order: residential treatment facility, separate alternative

school, separate self-contained special education classroom, resource room, and general education classroom (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Continuum of Education Placements**



The general education classroom and resource room are housed in a general education building. Residential treatment facilities and alternative schools are in separate locations. The self-contained special education class can either be housed in a general education building or in a separate location.

It is important to note that the continuum categories are not mutually exclusive. Students may attend more than one placement for portions of the school day. For example, a student transitioning from an alternative school may spend half their day in the alternative setting and half their day in self-contained special education class in a general education building.

Self-contained classrooms are separate classrooms that focus on particular student needs. There are self-contained classrooms for students with autism, intellectual disabilities, emotional disorders, and other disability categories. If a student is unable to make educational progress in the less-restrictive resource room or general education setting, a self-contained placement may be considered. The term self-contained is misleading, however, because students are included in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. For example, a student may spend four hours in a self-contained special education classroom and two hours in

general education each day or vice versa. Students placed in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional impairments may be eligible for special education services under various categories (emotionally impaired, otherwise health impaired, autism, etc).

Although the move towards inclusive education has meant more time in the general education setting for most students with disabilities, this does not hold true for students with emotional impairments. Students with emotional impairments are excluded from less-restrictive settings at higher rates than any other special education category (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Furthermore, compared with students in all other disability categories, students found eligible for special education with emotional impairments do not fare as well. Students with emotional impairments are more likely to be placed in a restrictive setting, suspended or expelled, or to drop out of school. And within three years of leaving school, more than 50 percent of students with emotional impairments have been arrested at least once (Merrell & Walker, 2004; Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout & Epstein, 2004).

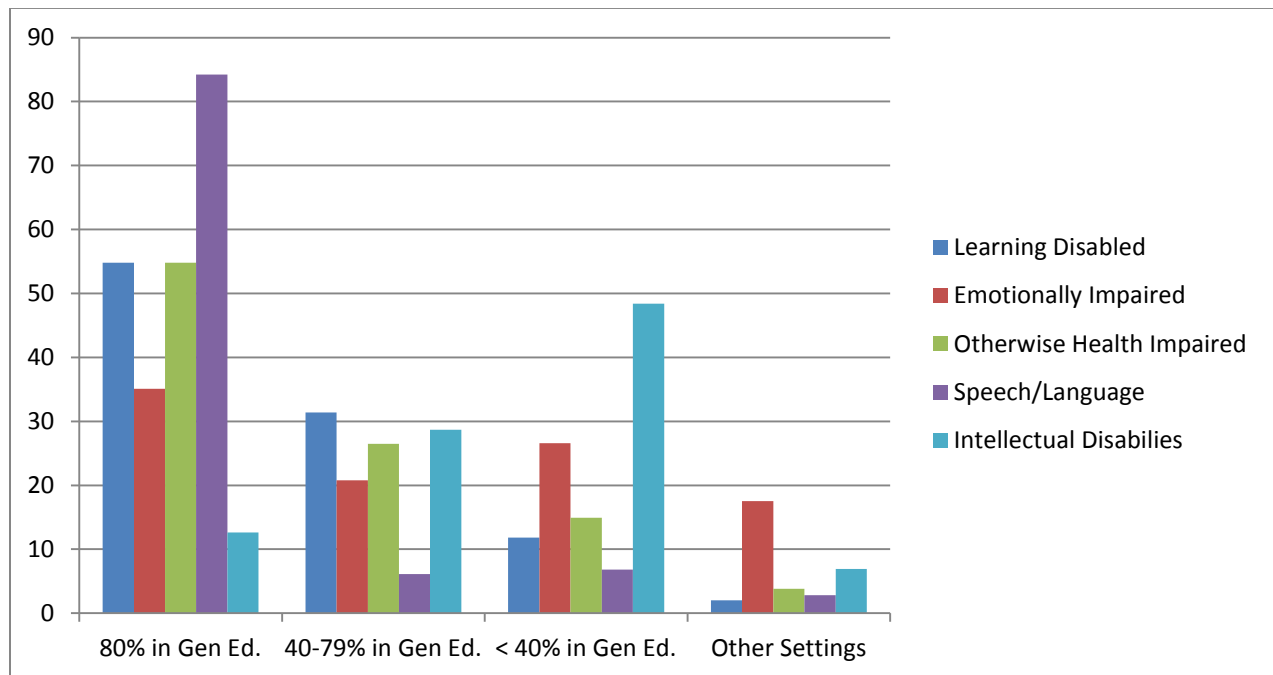
### **Statement of the Problem**

In the United States today, approximately 6.6 million students are eligible to receive special education services under one of the fourteen eligibility categories defined by IDEIA. Although students with special needs are entitled to accommodations and supports to help them experience success, they are still expected to achieve academically at the same rates as their general education peers. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed and in 2004 was tied to the reauthorization of IDEIA (Eckes & Swando, 2004). Both laws focus heavily on academic achievement for

all students, including those with special education certifications. Increased accountability for all students has meant more time in general education for most students. Today, more than half of students eligible for special education services spend up to 80% of their school day in the general education setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

When comparing students with emotional impairments to those who are either learning disabled, otherwise health impaired, or speech/language impaired, students with emotional impairments spend less time in general education (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of Time Spent in General Education by Disability Category, Fall 2006**



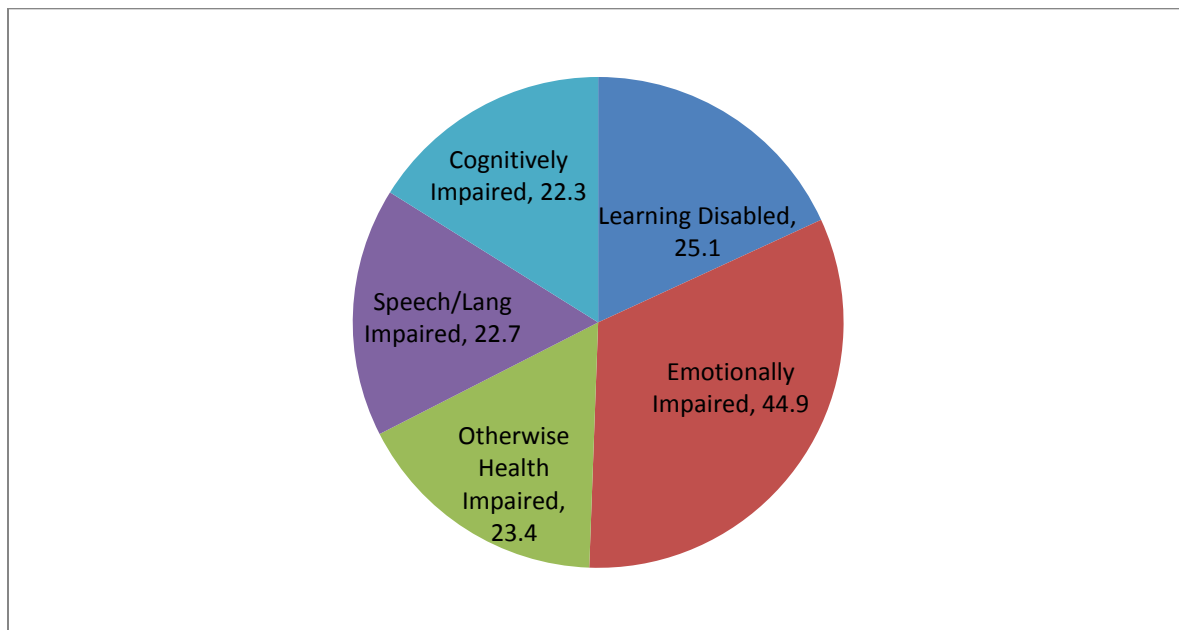
Compared to the more than 50% of special education students who spend more than 80% of their school day in general education, only a little over one-third of students with emotional impairments (35.1 %) spend 80% or more of their day in a general education setting. Furthermore, students with emotional impairments have the



highest rate (17.5%) of being educated in “other” settings. Other settings include: separate schools, residential facilities, homebound, correctional facility, or parentally placed in a private school (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Students who are emotionally impaired have the highest incidence of suspension and expulsion when compared to students from any other eligibility category. This may be a contributing factor that leads to students with emotional impairments dropping out of high school at almost twice the rate of other special education students (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Percentage of Students ages 14-21 Who Dropped Out of School, 2006**



Not only does IDEIA require that children be educated in the least restrictive environment, but it also strives “to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further

education, employment, and independent living” (IDEIA, 2004). We are charged with preparing children for the opportunity for a successful future.

Educating students outside of the general education setting is denying them access not only to quality instruction, but the opportunity for a successful future. General educators often feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of special education students (Vaughn, 1994; Alghazo, Naggat Gaad, 2004; de Boer, Pijl, Post, Minnaert, 2012). However, a dual system of education fails all students (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). The data point to a possible correlation between time spent in the general education setting and future success. Students with emotional impairments are the most excluded population from the general education, and also have the highest dropout rate when compared to their special education peers (Bost & Riccomini, 2006; Samuels, 2008). All students, including those with emotional impairments, should be given equal access to general education and future opportunities for success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine what factors contribute to successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments. Through qualitative methods including observations and teacher and student interviews, characteristics of the general education classroom were examined. Teacher perceptions about including students with emotional/behavioral impairments in their classrooms were explored. Special education students were interviewed to share their attitudes and beliefs about being included in the general education setting.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are students with emotional impairments perceptions of being included in the general education/inclusive classroom?
2. What are teachers' views/perceptions of having students with emotional impairments in their general education classrooms?
3. What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

### **Significance of Study**

Although federal policy requires special education students to be educated within the least restrictive environment, the interpretation and implementation of these mandates is open to interpretation. When struggling students become eligible for special education services they are often removed from the general education curriculum and given instruction in a special education setting. Students with emotional impairments are the least likely of any special education category to regain entry into the general education setting.

Identifying the conditions that are necessary to developing a successful inclusive environment for students with emotional issues has the potential to increase the possibility of more students with emotional impairments being educated within the general education setting.

### **Overview of Methodology**

An ethnographic qualitative design approach was followed in this study. The research took place in an elementary school in a large, suburban school district in a Mid-Western US state. Data collection methods included classroom observations, field

notes, student interviews, and teacher interviews. Additionally, a multiple case-study format was used with the students in this study.

Purposive sampling was used. Participants were chosen based on their identification of being placed within the self-contained setting for students with emotional impairments. It should be noted that not all students placed in this setting are eligible for special education services under the emotional impairment category, however all students have been found to have emotional and/or behavioral issues that impact their ability to progress in the general education curriculum and setting.

Five students placed in a self-contained classroom for emotionally impaired students participated in this study. Selective sampling was employed in order to have a cluster of two to three students in special education participating in two different general education classrooms. The disabilities included: emotional impairment and otherwise health impaired. These students were placed in a classroom for students with emotional impairments, but mainstreamed for their general education instruction in various subject areas throughout the day.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Students with [EBD]:** Emotional disturbance is defined by federal law as: “A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects a child's educational performance: a. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers; c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or e. A tendency to develop physical

symptoms or fears associated with personal and school problems. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.” For the purposes of this study, students who are eligible under both emotional impairment and otherwise health impaired, but have been placed in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional impairments, will be referred to as emotionally impaired.

**Emotionally Impaired:** Term used in this study to represent the student population placed in the self-contained setting for students with emotional impairments. Students with various disabilities may fit the term EI due to their emotions/behaviors being the biggest interfering factor with school success.

**IDEIA:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (originally PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act). This landmark legislation paved the way for inclusive education for students with special needs.

**LRE:** The least restrict environment (LRE) in which a student can experience success. IDEA requires that students are educated in the LRE to the maximum extent possible.

**Self-Contained Classroom:** A self-contained classroom is used when defining classrooms for special education students. IDEA does not define self-contained classrooms. Michigan’s rules for Teacher Certification (390.1101(r)), define a self-contained classroom as: “a classroom in which one teacher provides instruction to the same pupils for the majority of the pupils’ instructional day.” A majority is anything more than 50%. In this study, students are assigned to a classroom for students with emotional impairments, however may attend a general education classroom for more than 50% of their school day.

**Inclusive Education:** Including all students in the general education environment for portion or all of the school day. Inclusion may look different for different students. Based on individual need and capability, students participate at various levels both academically and socially. For the purposes of this study, general education and mainstream were used interchangeably to represent time spent in a general education classroom. The participants involved in the study used the term “mainstream” to represent the regular education setting.

**Success:** The degree to which an aim or goal is achieved. For the purpose of this study, success was determined by students with emotional impairments performance, both academically and socially within the general education setting. However, the level of performance is dependent upon individual student ability.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Historical Perspective of Inclusive Education

The Civil Rights Movement and the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision led to equal protection under the law to minorities. Segregated schools that were once deemed “separate but equal” were stated to be “inherently unequal”. The nation began its effort in desegregating public schools, providing an equal opportunity for all American children.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Brown decision paved the way for similar gains for those with disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities began forming special education advocacy groups as early as 1933, and fought to improve educational opportunities for their children. The premise was based on the belief that if students of differing races were entitled to an equal education, then so too were children with varying cognitive, emotional, and physical abilities (Pardini, 2002).

Compulsory education laws that had been in place nationwide since 1918, did not include students with disabilities. Students with special needs had the option to either remain at home or be institutionalized. Even those students with mild disabilities who did enroll in public school were likely to drop out well before high school graduation.

Out of the civil rights movement came policies focused on the civil rights of the disabled. In 1975, Congress passed the landmark legislation, Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), to change what was clearly an unjust situation.

Public Law 94-142, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federally mandated that schools provide a “free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment” for students with a range of disabilities. IDEA ensures a free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. It changed the face of public education. All schools were mandated to provide all students, no matter their disability, with the same educational opportunities as their same age non-disabled peers. This law made educational services available to millions of students previously denied access to the education system (Pardini, 2002).

In the late 1980’s, under the Regular Education Initiative (Will, 1986), supporters mobilized in an effort to include more students with disabilities into general education classes. This echoed the desegregation advocates’ efforts to reduce tracking that resulted in within-school segregation. In 1994, the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education affirmed the commitment to inclusive education and stated that “regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994).

Despite federal laws and adoption of inclusive education policies, the special education movement is similar to the Civil Rights movement in resistance as well. Resistance to inclusion has been widespread, just as strong and oppositional as the reactions after the Brown ruling (Ferri & Connor 2005). Thirty-five years after the passage of IDEA, many students with disabilities remain in educational settings separate from their non-disabled peers.

### **Special Education: Separate and Unequal**



IDEA states that students should receive their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). However, least restrictive is undefined in the law, allowing districts to interpret it as they see fit. Some characterize LRE as a “loophole” that led to two separate and unequal education systems: general education and special education (Linton, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). Although special education students were receiving access to public schooling, they were likely placed into segregated programs, further alienating them from their same aged peers and limiting future educational and occupational opportunities.

Special education is primarily deficit based. From the first evaluation, to labeling a student, to writing IEP goals, the focus is on what areas the student is struggling in. When focusing more on student deficits than strengths, students are prevented from living fully in the present (Schubert, 2009). The label becomes a limiting factor in everyday events.

Once students are determined to have a disability, they often receive “alternate” instruction. Some educators believe that general education instruction has shown not to work with these students, and instead of adjusting the curriculum, the students are pulled out to a special education room, where they most likely will receive instruction that looks nothing like what is going on in the general education setting (Pugach & Warger, 1996).

Adaptations, accommodations, and modifications are usually attributed to students receiving special education services. The term accommodation implies differences from the “normal” curriculum. This may result in reduction and simplification

of curriculum and expectations, which strengthens the belief that these students are less able than their peers (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

Giving certain students a separate education was deemed “inherently unequal” by the Supreme Court during the Civil Rights movement, yet we continue to segregate children by placing them in special education (Dunn, 1968). This creates a dual system of education which not only students with special needs, but all students (Lipsky & Gartner (1998). Poorer schools, as well as those with low achieving and/or special education students feel pressured to do well on tests, resulting in more scripted programs (Kohn, 2000). Students are not given the chance to socialize or be exposed to high-quality curriculum when separated from their general education peers. This stigmatizes students not only in the school setting, but in society as well.

Teaching students in this manner sends a message of unworthiness to students and leads to psychological hopelessness (Kozol, 2006).

### **Paradigms: What makes it so difficult to change?**

Despite federal laws and policies laying the groundwork for inclusive education, existing paradigms about special education students leads to resistance from some educators regarding implementation of inclusive practices. A paradigm is a system of rules/regulations and a problem-solving system (Barker, 2001). All new information is first filtered through our existing paradigms, which may limit our ability to be flexible in our thinking. Everyone, in every field have paradigms which guide their beliefs, actions, perceptions, and reactions to and the ability to see new ideas (Kuhn, 1996). Paradigms determine our perceptions, which can be useful in helping us to focus our attention, but can also cause us to ignore new ways of thinking.

Difference is often seen as an impairment instead of “something that happens in the natural course of things” (Striker, 1997). The paradigm of viewing differences as impairments creates barriers to access for individuals with differences. This view often places not only blame, but also responsibility for one’s access on the individual with differences.

IDEA guarantees students with special needs the right to a “free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). That means that to the greatest extent possible, students should be educated alongside their same-aged general education peers. Continuing to separate students because of differences perpetuates the negative viewpoint of disabilities, justifies labeling, and results in differential treatment (Shapiro, 2000).

In order for inclusive education to happen, diversity must be celebrated within the school community. This most often requires a philosophical shift in beliefs, values, and habits (Carrington, 1999). Using a disabilities studies perspective, inclusion practices and special education can be transformed. This paradigm defines differences as natural, acceptable, and ordinary. An authentic inclusive school reflects a democratic philosophy where all students are valued and differences are normalized (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

To understand belief systems, it is important to examine past philosophy and practice.

### **The Building Blocks of Education: Rooted in Empirical Thought**

Our current approach to education takes us back to the 1500s. Renee Descartes, a mathematician and philosopher, utilized analytical and logical thinking to explain how

the universe worked. Descartes believed the universe was nothing but a machine, and each part or experience could be explained by science and math. Isaac Newton further cemented this idea with his universal mathematical formula. The Cartesian/Newtonian view is the belief that there is a clear division between mind and matter (Capra, 1982). In this model, knowledge is viewed as a substance, a substance that teachers can “give” to their students (Baghassian, 2006). This time period marked the birth of Reductionism. Everything could be broken into smaller parts. The belief that knowledge was a substance led to the belief that prevails in education today: everything, including students, can be broken down, labeled, and categorized.

### **Behaviorist Theory**

Since the 1500s, the empirical paradigm has been the dominant view of the universe. Science is built upon these beliefs. What cannot be measured or quantified is simply not fact. This ideology also shaped behaviorism and behavioral psychology. Behaviorism is rooted within the empirical paradigm. Behaviorists focused on the body, not the mind. Behaviorism is the belief that behaviors can be measured, trained, and changed. Everything can be broken down and explained by patterns of observable behavior.

Our nation’s first schools were built upon the behaviorist/industrialist viewpoint. In the mid-1800s, Horace Mann led the reformist movement to create common schools (Nasaw, 1979). These schools would be open to all social classes Nasaw quotes Mann’s reason to support the preventative efforts of school reform: “men are cast-iron; but children are wax”. To create a society of law-abiding, hard workers, children must be molded at a young age before the ills of poverty could take over. These first schools

were built upon the empirical paradigm. All efforts were to gain control and certainty. Common schools worked hard to perpetuate social, political, and economic control over society. Diversity was neither welcomed nor celebrated in our nation's first schools. Students were expected to conform.

Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), a Russian physiologist, contributed greatly to behavioral psychology. His studies of the salivary glands of dogs lead to the discovery and development of classical conditioning. In his work with dogs, Pavlov found that an unconditioned stimulus (food) lead to an unconditioned response (salivation). Through pairing the unconditioned stimulus with a neutral stimulus (bell), Pavlov created a conditioned stimulus and response. After many trials, the dog would salivate at the sound of the bell, with or without food being present (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Pavlov's Classical Conditioning Model**

<b>Before Conditioning</b>		<b>Before Conditioning</b>	
Unconditioned Stimulus	Unconditioned Response	Neutral Stimulus	No Conditioned Response
Food = Salivation		Bell = No Salivation	
<b>During Conditioning</b>		<b>After Conditioning</b>	
Pairing of neutral and unconditioned stimulus	Unconditioned response	Conditioned Stimulus	Conditioned Response
Bell + Food = Salivation		Bell = Salivation	

American psychologist, Edward Thorndike (1874-1949) built upon Pavlov's work by studying stimulus and response paired with learning. His work with animals led to "learning laws". He found that learning happens through trial and error and that behavior is likely to increase when the behaviors is paired with a favorable response.

John B. Watson (1878-1958), an American psychologist, is credited with defining behaviorism in psychology as the objective study of behavior. Watson believed that behavior was conditioned and could be learned and unlearned. He believed children had three main emotions: fear, rage, and love. In his famous “Little Albert Experiment”, Watson conditioned Albert to fear rats by pairing rats with a loud noise during every exposure. Watson placed little emphasis on the learner and thought that learning took place through manipulation of environmental factors.

B.F. Skinner developed operant conditioning. Operant conditioning is based on stimulus-response theory, but with operant conditioning, the learner “operates” on the environment to get a response. If the response is reinforced with a positive experience, the behavior is likely to be repeated. If the learner’s behavior results in a “punisher” or undesired response, the behavior will decrease (negative reinforcement). Skinner also developed schedules of ratio and interval reinforcement which were shown to strengthen responses. In an effort to make education more efficient, Skinner recommended the use of teaching machines (Skinner, 1958). His version of the teaching machine presented new material in small, sequential steps. According to Skinner (1954), through this method of self-regulation based on learning rate, students quickly “learn to be right” and classrooms using teaching machines are “scenes of intense concentration”.

**Classroom Implications.** Behavioral psychology became the psychology of learning, and thus has shaped our educational policy and practice of both past and present.

The labeling and sorting of students persists in every school and within classrooms (Oakes, 1985). When students are found eligible for special education services, they are labeled and then often removed from general education. In this model, the label, more so than the student, drives the services. Even within general education classrooms, we continue to label students. Students are often labeled high, medium, or low and then grouped accordingly.

One could argue that schools haven't changed much in the last century and a half. When students exhibit variances and do not fit the mold, they are deemed impaired in some way. Labeling and separating students with special needs from the general education peers falls under the empirical paradigm.

Behaviorism has left its mark on federal legislation, which continues to shape instructional practice. IDEA specifies that IEPs must also address behavior in addition to learning issues. School teams must complete a functional behavior analysis (FBA) and write a behavior intervention plan (BIP) to help students demonstrating behavioral issues (Fitzsimmons, 1998). Defining the behavior and its function in the FBA is quite behaviorist in nature. The behavior is broken down and then a specific plan with positive reinforcements is made to shape/change/replace the undesired student behavior.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), credited to Skinner, is used today primarily with students on the autism spectrum, or students with developmental delays. With ABA, specific skills needed for increased independence are broken into small steps. Each step is specifically taught and correct responses are rewarded with positive reinforcement. Repeated and long-term work with ABA can lead to positive changes in all functional areas (Cooper, 1982).

In addition, while IEPs are focused on the individual, they must also be aligned with state learning standards with measurable objectives. It is no longer acceptable to write general goals for students. Goals must be specific, tied to a grade level state standard, and measurable. Quantifying all goals has an impact on instruction. Less emphasis is placed on the individual learner and more emphasis is given to the final test score.

No Child Left Behind requires that 100% of students will be proficient on state standardized assessments by 2014. The focus on accountability has changed the way teachers teach. More time is spent on mastering many objectives and preparing students to take tests than on teaching critical thinking skills.

The Third Mathematics and Science Study found that compared to top-ranked countries, the standard eighth grade math text attempted to cover almost twice as many topics. This lends itself to curriculum which is a “mile wide and an inch deep” (Kulm, 2007). This applies to other content areas as well. The behaviorist viewpoint focuses on giving curriculum to the students, with the idea that “more is better”. This “banking” concept of education, that teachers “deposit” facts into the brain of students, treats students not as humans, but as machines (Friere, 1970).

### **Constructivist Theory**

Einstein’s groundbreaking work in physics and underlying belief in nature’s harmony, led to a new way of thinking. The paradigm associated with Einstein’s physics was an open/interpretive viewpoint. The universe was not seen as a machine, but as an interrelated system. The focus was not on objects themselves, but on their relations to other things. Unlike the Cartesian method, the world according to quantum theory did



not operate like clockwork. They were not defined absolutes, but probabilities (Capra, 1982).

The interpretive paradigm focuses on the construction of knowledge. Knowledge is not something that can be bestowed upon the student. The student must connect what they already know to new ideas, constructing knowledge. Interpretive thought expects learners to question, to ask why, and to take an active role in their learning.

Out of the interpretive paradigm came constructivism. Constructivism is the learning theory based on the work of Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, and Dewey. It contends that people construct knowledge by connecting new experiences our existing understanding (Straits & Wilke, 2007).

Jean Piaget is the known as the father of the constructivist theory. As a psychologist, he was primarily interested in how knowledge developed in humans. Piaget defined four developmental stages of child development. Piaget claimed that through adaptation by assimilation and accommodation, people moved through the stages. Assimilation involves the interpretation of events based on the existing knowledge, whereas accommodation requires the changing of pre-existing knowledge to make sense of the environment (Atherton, 2011). Using both assimilation and accommodation, people are constantly constructing knowledge based on their experiences.

Jerome Bruner's learning theories also support the constructivist theory. Like Piaget, Bruner believe that learning is an active process, where the learner transforms information and constructs new ideas. Bruner developed the spiraling model of

curriculum, where learners are continually building upon what they have already learned (Keaseley, 2007).

Vygotsky believed that social interaction plays a critical role in the development of cognition (1978). He contended that the range of skills developed with guidance or collaboration exceeds what can be done individually. The constructivist theory supports his findings. It is embedded with social interaction and peer collaboration.

John Dewey (1859-1952), American philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer, believed that democracy must be present in educating our students. Dewey wrote about the freedom of the learner and the quality of educational experiences as requirements for authentic learning (Dewey, 1938). Social learning and communication are main tenets in Dewey's theory of education. In Dewey's "utopian schools" students are empowered to learn content that holds significance to them and in ways that encourage risk-taking and growth as an individual (Dewey, 1933; Schubert, 2009).

According to Brooks and Brooks (1993), constructivism has five overarching principles: (1) posing problems of emerging relevance to learners; (2) structuring learning around "big ideas" or primary concepts; (3) seeking and valuing students' points of view; (4) adapting curriculum to address students' suppositions; and (5) assessing student learning in the context of teaching.

The principles of constructivism are supported by brain research. Our brains are complex meaning makers. Our learning is shaped by our own experiences and how our brains store information (Caine & Caine, 1990). Students participating in the same lesson will most likely have varying ways of storing what is taught. Clay (2005) found that learning most likely occurs when new knowledge is connected to a known. When

new information can be tied to a known concept, it becomes relevant and meaningful to the learner. However, when we are taught skills in isolation, our brains have a harder time storing the information (Sousa, 2005).

Many traditional schools follow the transmission approach to instruction. Teachers transmit the knowledge, often through lecture, to passive students. The participatory model focuses on the construction of knowledge instead of the rote memorization of facts (Wilke, 2007). Constructivism theory supports student generated curriculum, where teachers, not state officials, are the authority on what will be taught (Grace, 1999).

**Classroom Implications.** Constructivism requires students to play an active role in their education. Learners are expected to find their own solutions by building upon prior knowledge and experience. In a constructivist classroom, learning is meaningful and authentic, and it is a social activity, where teachers and peers encourage learning (Neo, 2007).

One critical piece of the constructivist viewpoint is the ability to adapt curriculum. A constructivist would not use the same lesson plans again and again, because students change and thus, curriculum must change to meet the needs of the new students.

In the inclusive classroom, diversity is expected and celebrated and falls under the interpretive paradigm of education. There are not absolutes in this classroom. Teacher instruction and student groupings are flexible and changing based on student needs. Constructivism lends itself to inclusive education. Students are the driving force behind instructional decisions in the constructivist classroom. The teacher in this

classroom adapts lessons on a regular basis to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs.

### **Inclusion and Student Achievement**

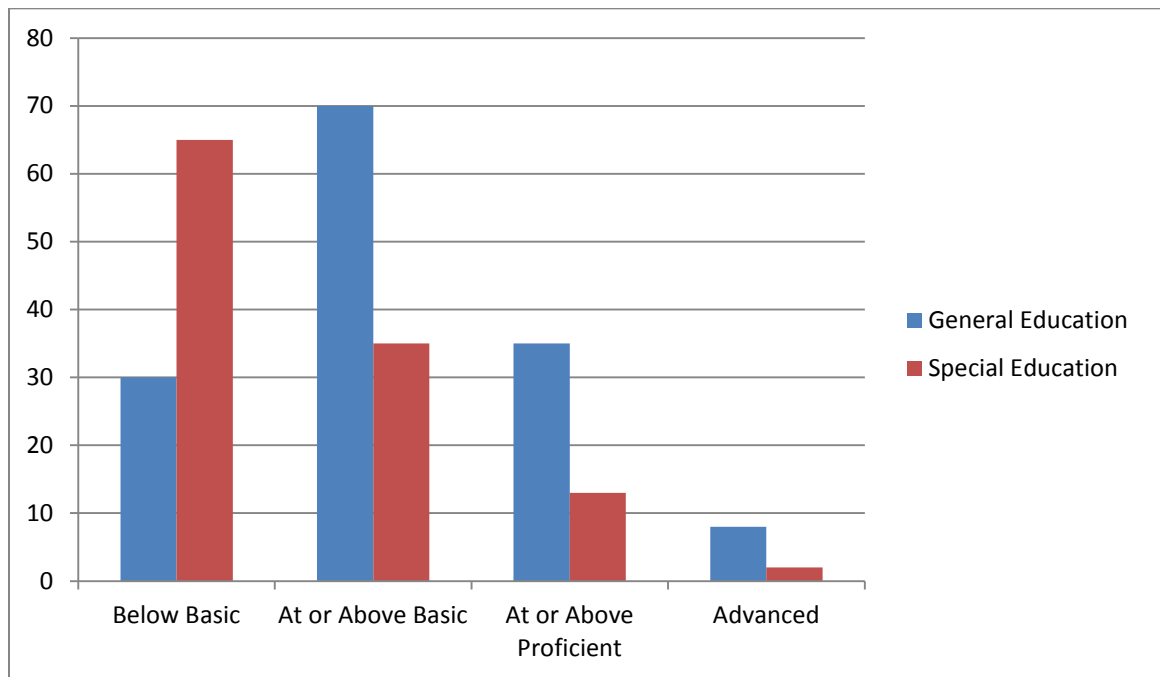
More than ever before, schools are being held accountable for the achievement of all students. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) law was first authorized in 2002. This law aims to improve the performance of elementary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for all states and school districts. NCLB requires states to develop assessments in basic skills areas to be given to all students in specific grades, including students receiving special education services.

With NCLB, the special education assertion that “all children can learn” has been altered to “all children can learn to high standards”. In 2004, NCLB was linked to IDEA. Both policies undoubtedly impact special education students. Special education students must be taught the general education curriculum by highly qualified teachers, are expected to learn challenging academic content, and take state achievement tests (Sackel, 2006).

In addition to giving assessments to all students, schools must improve their scores each year until 2014, when 100% of all students are expected to reach the same high standards in reading and math. If any subgroup, including special education, does not make progress towards the 100% success rate on math and reading, the whole school would be classified as failing (Shindel, 2004). Schools can face sanctions for inadequate test scores, including loss of accreditation and funding. NCLB further states that every child, special education or not, must be proficient in reading and math by 2014.

The National Assessment of Education (NAEP) is a national assessment given to students in grades 4, 8, and 12. It serves as the nation's report card. Although trends show that American students are achieving at the same rates they always have, NCLB has forced schools to take a closer look at instruction and results for all students. When comparing how students with disabilities perform on the NAEP to general education students, there is a large discrepancy. Almost two-thirds of special education students perform below basic, compared to the one-third of non-disabled students (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP Reading Scores, 2009**



The achievement discrepancy between special and general education students shows that current practices are not meeting the needs of students. Time and time again, research has demonstrated the social and academic benefit of including students with special needs in general education. Regardless of disability or grade level, special

needs students who are included fare better than their special education peers who are not included (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

### Meeting Diverse Learning Needs in the Inclusive Classroom

The idea that learners are diverse and learn in diverse ways comes from the interpretive paradigm. Recognizing that all students, not just those in special education, have are individuals with learning differences, is the cornerstone of differentiation in the classroom. Flexibility, the ability to adapt, and creativity are the most important factors leading to effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Howard Gardner built upon Bruner and Dewey's ideas that learning is individual to the learner. He developed the theory of "multiple intelligences" which contends that intelligence is not a single entity that can be quantified with IQ tests. Humans interpret and learn information in a multitude of ways. Gardner came up with seven, and then later amended the list to nine "ways of knowing" (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Gardner's Multiple Intelligences** (Excelsior Learning Center, 2010)



Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences highlights different learning styles and acknowledges that not all learners learn in the same way, and thus should be provided with diverse ways of accessing curricular content.

Along with different ways of knowing, there are different ways of showing learning as well. When working within an inclusive environment, it is crucial to allow and plan for student variance (Oglan, 2002). Tomlinson (2003) contends that differentiating is more than providing students with materials at their level. It is meeting students where they are, but basing instruction on student strength, not deficits.

The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are based on differentiation and providing equal opportunities for all to learn (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2009). There are three guiding principles in UDL: providing multiple means of (1) representation, (2) action and expression, and (3) engagement. This framework of instruction meets the needs of all students while providing access to grade level content.

Whole Schooling (Peterson, 2007) aligns with UDL, and also takes inclusive teaching further by focusing on democracy in the classroom and student relationships. The principles of Whole Schooling designed to create effective learning for all are: (1) create learning spaces based student needs; (2) help children learn the tools and skills of genuine democracy; (3) create a sense of belonging, care, and community; (4) include all students in learning together; (5) support learning through the efforts of peers, colleagues, and specialists in the classroom; (6) develop genuine partnerships between educators, parents, and the community; (7) engage children through authentic, multilevel, differentiated instruction — connecting learning to the real world and drawing

on the gifts, voices, experiences, and cultures of all at the 'just right' level of each child; and (8) assessing students in ways that will contribute to learning. Whole Schooling aims to empower students. Students are a vital part in their own and others' learning, which simultaneously strengthens academic and social skills.

Differentiation in general education classrooms aligns with inclusive teaching practices. Oftentimes, when students are labeled as special education students, they are pulled out of the general education classroom to receive direct, systematic teaching in the area of need (Allington, 2006). In differentiated classrooms, the modifications and adjustments are already built into the general curriculum, allowing students with learning differences to be more readily included. The onus for student learning is on the teacher, with student performance acting as a guide for instructional needs (Clay, 2005).

One way of teaching to meet the needs of all is the workshop model. The workshop model is based on the constructivist theory and is student centered. While the state grade-level expectations help guide teachers in content, the students really are the ones guiding teacher decision making. The workshop is designed to be flexible to meet the needs of individual learners while promoting higher order thinking skills across the curriculum. This is done through the use of whole-class mini-lessons on a specific strategy or topic and then small group instruction based on student needs (Calkins, 2010). Originally piloted with reading and writing, the workshop model is now recognized as an effective teaching strategy across subject areas and with both general and special education students (Fu & Shelton, 2007).



## **Inclusive Teaching for Students with Emotional impairments: Setting the Stage for Success**

### **Attitudes of Acceptance**

Teacher paradigms and attitudes toward special education and students greatly impacts the degree of success achieved with integration. While legislation may grant physical access to classrooms, acceptance cannot be mandated (Alghazo, Dodeen & Algaryouti 2003). Results of studies by Barton (1992) and Wilczenski (1993) indicated that the success or failure of inclusion is determined by the attitudes held by both regular and special educators. Teachers with positive attitudes about special education students allow and encourage and implement inclusive practices (Jordan, Glenn, McGhie-Richmond, 2010). Conversely, negative attitudes held by teachers towards students with disabilities limits student opportunities to be integrated with their general education peers.

The attitudes and abilities to teach students with disabilities are greatly impacted by the amount of contact teachers have with special education students (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, Schattman, 1993). If teachers receive more instruction about including special education students and how their needs can be addressed, they may have less negative attitudes about inclusion (Shoho, Katims, & Wilks, 1997; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). In a study by Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995), a positive correlation was found between teachers' attitudes and the number of courses taken in teaching students with disabilities. When mainstreaming students into general education, it is crucial that the general education teacher feel comfortable and supported.

Despite the commitment to inclusion by most districts, students with emotional impairments remain the most excluded population of special education students (Simpson, 2004). In fact, students with emotional impairments are often cited as reasons to not support inclusion (Shanker, 1995). General education teachers have cited fear of violence in their classrooms as well as an inability to meet the needs of the other students in their classrooms when including students with emotional impairments (Clough & Lindsay, 1991; Heflin & Bullock, 1999).

### **Supporting Teachers and Students**

It is important that general education teachers feel empowered with the mainstreaming process and that their voices are heard (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). More often than not, general education teachers feel ill-equipped to handle the academic and behavioral needs of students with EI (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). In a meta-analysis of studies done on integration of students with disabilities into general education, most teachers agreed to try inclusion, but less than half believed it was a realistic goal for all students (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

In a large study of inclusion of students with EI, factors for success included: training for general education teachers, consultative support, and ongoing communication between team members (Shapiro, 1999). Heflin and Bullock (1999) found similar results in their interviews of both special and general education teachers. Crucial variables for successful implementation of inclusion were: (1) Inclusion reflecting natural proportions, (2) Instructional support, (3) Training for school personnel emphasizing collaboration, and (4) Careful planning and systematic implementation.

Additionally, those interviewed felt that decisions regarding inclusion should be made on an individual basis.

Frequent communication between IEP team members is important for inclusion to be successful. Academic and behavioral interventions may have to be frequently changed to address current student concerns. When teachers feel supported, they feel more comfortable including students with EI in their classrooms. It is important to have a systematic plan in place for what inclusion will look like for each student.

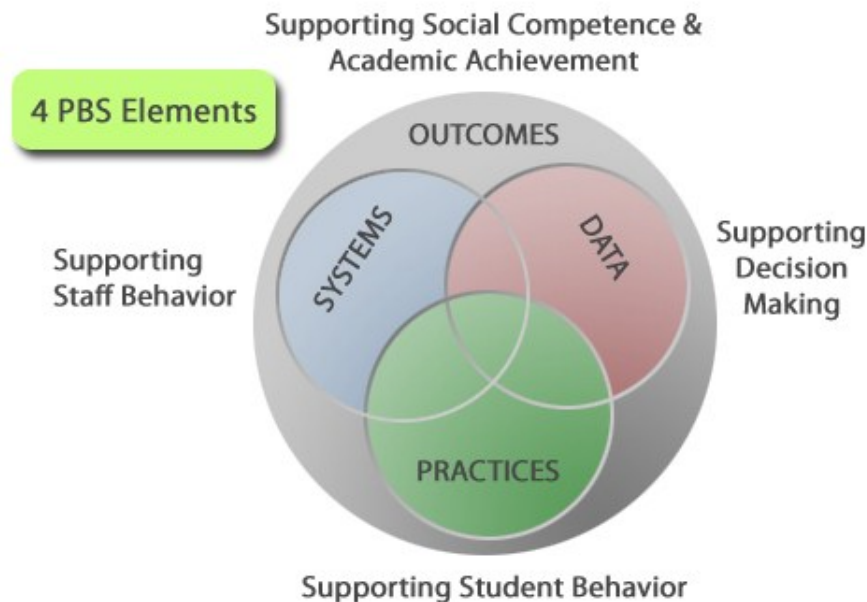
### **Positive Behavior Support**

Problem behaviors often interfere with the ability of schools to educate children (Crone & Horner 2003). With behavior linked to academic success (Wentzel, 1993; Anderson, Kutash, & Duchnowski, 2001; Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith 2004), behavior management is a crucial factor to consider when planning for student success. Behavioral support is important for all students, and especially those with emotional and behavioral needs. Since the amendment of IDEA in 1997, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports has been mentioned in both federal and state policies regarding student behavior. IDEA requires: “The IEP team to consider the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for any student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others” (20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(B)(i)). The Michigan State Board of Education (2006) released this statement: “It is the policy of the State Board of Education that each school district in Michigan implement a system of school-wide positive behavior support strategies.”

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a school-wide systems based approach to support appropriate student behavior. PBS is proactive and aims to define, teach, and

support positive behavior across school settings (PBIS.org, 2009). There are four key elements to PBS: (1) Outcomes, (2) Practices, (3) Data, and (4) Systems (See Figure 7).

**Figure 7: PBS Elements** (PBIS.org, 2012)



Positive Behavior Support is unique to each school community. First, the school community targets outcomes for students, then develops practices to achieve outcomes, uses data to drive and change practice, and makes sure supportive systems are in place to keep PBS going. Behavior traits are chosen (i.e. respectful, responsible, resilient) and a behavior matrix is created identifying what that behavior looks like across setting. Once the specific behaviors are defined, similar to academics, behaviors are explicitly taught to students within each environment. A key component to PBS is recognizing and acknowledging positive behavior choices made by students. This is more than saying, “good job” to a student. Feedback is specific and meaningful.

Positive Behavior Support has been found to have a positive effect on both behavior and academics for special education students (Chitiyo, Chitiyo, Park, et al 2011). Creating a school-wide system with built in positive behavioral supports, will lead to increased academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

## **Chapter Two: Summary**

The way we define, view, and support special education students has changed dramatically over the years. From being fully excluded to fully included, there remains quite a range in services for students with special needs.

Behaviorism has shaped our current education policies, requiring mastery for all, even those with varying abilities and needs. Much of special education policy and practice is rooted in behaviorism and focused on measuring quantifiable objectives. Constructivism provides the framework for differentiating instruction and lends itself to inclusive education. While the two paradigms subscribe to conflicting ideologies, both are intertwined in current school practice and impact societal views on education.

Schools not only mirror society, but can also help create it through innovative practices (Sopon-Shevin, 2003; Ainscow, 2004). Separating special education students from general education students is just as counterproductive as separating students based on race. Research conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development clearly establishes that those nations with the highest degree of social inclusion and heterogeneity in their schools not only get better results, they also narrow the gap between high and low achievers (Porter, 2004). Educating all children together promotes better outcomes for everyone involved (Staub & Peck, 1995; Peltier, 1997; Idol, 2006). Providing students with opportunities to interact with a wide range of people

will increase the likelihood of successfully preparing them for real-world diversity and will increase chances of success (Wagner, Friend, Bursuck, Kutash, Duchnowski, Sumi, & Epstein 2006).

Students with special needs, including those with emotional impairments, do better academically and socially when educated in the general education setting (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Additionally, student engagement has been shown to be a determining factor in overall student success. A sense of belonging has been correlated to increased chance of staying in school (Finn, 1993; Reschly & Christenson, 2006). Thus, including all students in the general education environment can have long-term positive effects on students.

## Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter will outline the research design used in this study. An ethnographic, qualitative research design approach, supported by a case study format was used. An overview of research paradigms, ethnography, population sample, ethics, research design and analysis, and trustworthiness will be presented.

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are students with emotional impairments perceptions of being included in the general education/inclusive classroom?
2. What are teachers' views/perceptions of having students with emotional impairments in their general education classrooms?
3. What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

### Research Paradigms

Two overarching paradigms guide research: positivist and naturalist. Positivism is grounded in truth-seeking. The research is independent of the researcher, and through use of direct observation, phenomena can be taken apart to examine all the pieces (Krauss, 2005). Positivists use pre-determined categories in which to view their data. Naturalists however, view research as a discovery (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Knowledge of the phenomena being studied comes from direct interaction and attaching meanings to what is discovered.

## Ethnography in Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is exploratory in nature and uses the viewpoints of participants to determine conclusions about research questions. Qualitative research does not manipulate variables and takes place in real-world settings (Patton, 2002). It is often incorrectly used synonymously with ethnography (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Qualitative data collection methods include observation, interviews, surveys, and various other methods. Although ethnographic research shares these qualitative traits, ethnographers examine and attempt “to make sense of human social behavior in terms of cultural patterning” (Wolcott, 1990).

The most important characteristic of ethnography is culture. “Ethnography generates or builds theories of cultures – or explanations of how people think, believe, and behave...” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999 p.8). As outlined by LeCompte and Schensul (1999), there are seven characteristics of an ethnography:

- “It is carried out in a natural setting, not in a laboratory.
- It involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants.
- It presents an accurate reflection of participants’ perspective and behaviors.
- It uses inductive, interactive, and recursive data collection and analytic strategies to build local cultural theories.
- It uses multiple data sources, including both quantitative and qualitative data.
- It frames all human behavior and belief within a socio-political and historical context.
- It uses the concept of culture as lens through which to interpret results” (p.9).

Ethnography seeks to tell the story of a culture through different perspectives. Data collection and analysis helps the researcher develop a theory about the subject matter being studied.



## **Ethnographic Research Paradigms**

Paradigms are a lens through which we view the world and shape how researchers interpret the data. Within the field of qualitative research, there are five leading paradigms which guide and shape ethnographic research design: positivist, critical, interpretive/constructivist, ecological, and emerging social network. The positivist research paradigm is grounded in the observable and measurable events obtained from an objective researcher. Critical theory seeks to bring attention to inequities within a culture, through an analytic and thorough investigation of history, politics, and culture. The interpretive paradigm views reality as fluid and a social construct based on the individuals within situations. The interpretive researcher is involved in the culture being studied and through examination of several viewpoints and interactions, is able to further develop understanding of a culture. The ecological approach focuses on individuals and how outside influences impact them. The social network researcher focuses on the impact of social relationships in specific cultural domains (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

## **Research Design**

A qualitative, interpretive research design using a comparative case-study format was used in this study. The methods that were used in this study fall under the naturalist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Students placed in a classroom for students with emotional impairments were observed in their general education classrooms, as it occurred every day in the natural environment. The environment was not be manipulated in any way during this study.

The methods used for this study also fall under the interpretive paradigm (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). The students in this study were viewed in the social context of the general education inclusive environment. Teacher perceptions, student experiences and perceptions, as well as observations of the general education environment were all explored in depth and then related back to the larger context of inclusive education. A theory about the culture of inclusive education for students with emotional impairments was developed.

For this study, the researcher observed in inclusive classrooms that served students with emotional impairments. Observations took place in two general education classrooms: one fourth grade classroom and one fifth grade classroom. According to Spradley (1980), there are five criteria to be used when choosing a social situation to observe:

**Simplicity.** The researcher examined teacher and student behavior and interactions during various parts of the school day where students were included in the general education environment.

**Accessibility.** Both classrooms were accessible to the researcher. The researcher teaches in the same school building.

**Unobtrusiveness.** The role of the researcher was not obtrusive. The researcher was the homeroom teacher to the students included in this study, so was known to the research participants and other building students. Although the researcher was already a member of the culture/site as a complete participant, the researcher observed in the general education setting as a passive participant observer, unless severe behavior exhibited by students required teacher involvement.

**Permissibility.** The district and families of the students will be granted the researcher permission to formally observe in the general education setting, after consent from the Wayne State University Human Investigations Committee was received. The teachers granted the researcher permission to observe in their classrooms before becoming involved in the study.

**Frequently Occurring Activities.** Mainstreaming occurred on a daily basis, including different subject areas. Students were observed during reading, math, and science instruction in the general education settings.

### **Case Study Elements**

A case study format was used in this study. Yin (2008) defines a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Case study evidence in this study came from archival records retrieved from student special education files, interviews of students, direct observation of participants in general education, and student “Mainstream Notes” as physical artifacts. Five separate cases were analyzed in this study, with the focus being on successful inclusive education experiences.

### **Role of Researcher in Ethnography**

The researcher in this study was the special education teacher of the participating students with EI. For the purpose of this study, the roles of teacher and researcher were used interchangeably. At the time of this study, the students were on the researcher’s caseload in the self-contained classroom for students with emotional impairments.

Lecompte, Schensul, and Schensul (1999) define participant observation as “a data collection technique that requires the researcher to be present at, involved in, and recording the routine daily activities with people in the field setting” (p. 91). The researcher for this study was involved in the day to day activities of each student, but during the general education observations, the researcher maintained “passive participation”, defined by Spradley (1980) as “present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent.” While the researcher interacts with the students while they are in the self-contained EI classroom and regularly communicates with general education teachers about student performance, when students attend general education, they do so without the physical presence of the special education teacher/researcher or aide. In an attempt to replicate the natural environment and to maintain unobtrusiveness, the researcher took the role of a passive participant while in the general education setting.

Although the researcher did not actively participate in the classroom observations, in qualitative research, the researcher is often seen as “the instrument” (Patton, 2002, p.14). The interpretation and collection of data depend on background, skill, and competence of the researcher.

### **Description of the Setting**

This study took place in a large, suburban school district in a Mid-Western US state. At the time of this study, the school district had twelve elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools. The total student population at the time of this study was 15,600 with 1,207 students eligible for special education services. At the elementary level, 563 students received special education support and services.

The school district involved in this study is committed to providing special education students with a quality education within the least restrictive setting. All schools participate in mainstreaming/inclusive education based on individual student need. At the elementary level there are self-contained programs for students with emotional impairments, autism spectrum disorder, and cognitive impairments. Students must first maximize all support systems in the general education setting and resource room setting before being eligible for placement in a self-contained program. Although titled “self-contained”, few programs operate in isolation. The philosophy of the school district is to have all students participate in general education for as much of the school day as possible.

### **Definition of Population and Sample**

The number of students eligible for special education support at the research site (grades K-5) at the time of this study was 88. There were two self-contained programs for students with emotional impairments at the research site. The lower elementary program (K-2) had 10 students, and the upper elementary program (3-5) had 12 students. The 22 students in the self-contained programs spent varying amounts of time in general education classrooms. The population used in this study had the following characteristics: history of not being included in general education due to severe behaviors, placement in the upper elementary self-contained EI program at the research site, and participation in at least one subject area in the general education setting.

### **Participant Selection**

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Participants were chosen based on their identification of being placed within the self-contained setting for students with

emotional impairments. There were twelve students in the special education classroom. The option to participate was given to all students and their parents. From those who gave permission, five students placed in the classroom for students with emotional impairments participated in this study. Selective sampling was employed in order to have a cluster of two to three special education students participating in two different general education classrooms. The disabilities included: emotional impairment and otherwise health impaired. These students were placed in a classroom for students with emotional impairments, but they mainstreamed for their general education instruction in various subject areas throughout the day.

### **Ethics and Protection of Participants**

A peer of the researcher served as the key personnel and met with the special education students' parents to receive written consent granting participation of their child in the study. Due to the students' placement in the researcher's classroom and their young age, in order to avoid coercion, the key personnel obtained oral assent from each student. The researcher explained and received consent to observe in the general education teachers' classrooms and to conduct interviews. Permission was also obtained through the school principal, school district superintendent, and the Human Investigations Committee at Wayne State University.

Data was handled to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Interviews were recorded on a digital tape recorder, and once transcribed, were erased from the recorder. All participants were given numbers and pseudonyms. No student or teacher names or identifying information were used in this study. All electronic and paper data was stored in a secure, locked location in the researcher's home.

## Data Collection

Several methods of data collection were used in this study: student and teacher interviews, direct observation, historical data review, field notes, and collection of artifacts. Maxwell (2005) describes triangulation of data as “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (p. 112). Collecting different types of data from multiple sources “allows a better assessment of the generality of explanations that one develops” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112).

**Table 1: Data Collection Schedule**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Month 1	Compile historical data for each student Complete formal teacher and student interviews Transcribe interviews Journaling
Month 2	Review transcriptions with a peer Analyze interviews Look for themes/codes across data Complete 3 observations of each student group Collect field notes Conduct informal interviews w/students Continue journaling
Month 3	Complete observations Collect artifacts Continue to analyze data, looking for themes. Conduct 2 <sup>nd</sup> formal interviews with students and staff Continue journaling
Month 4	Analyze all data, Complete cultural domain analysis, taxonomic and componential analyses Continue journaling

### Formal Interviews

The researcher conducted formal interviews that were audio recorded with the students and participating teachers at the start of this study (See Appendices F and G).

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions and were exploratory in nature.

Open-ended questions are designed for any answer given to be acceptable. There are no correct answers and questions are not given in a multiple-choice format (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The interview format allows the researcher to explore, in-depth, perspectives from both teachers and students about mainstreaming, what it is to them, and what makes it successful. Formal interviews were completed at the start of the study with participating teachers and students. Second interviews were conducted after initial data analysis to further clarify and explore themes across data.

### **Observations**

The researcher observed students in the general education setting throughout the three-month course of this study. Direct observations in the field provide an understanding of context, routines, and a chance to move beyond the perceptions of the participants (Patton, 2002). Three observations, ranging from 20-45 minutes of each general education setting being studied were completed. The purpose of the observations was to gain information about the general education setting: the curriculum, the interactions between teacher and students and between peers.

### **Field Notes**

The researcher recorded details from each observation in a traditional notebook. Observations were recorded as field notes and did not follow a specific template. A condensed account of the observations were collected in the researcher's field notebook and recorded as the events occurred. Shortly after the observation, the researcher took the key phrases recorded and expanded them, filling in events and details (Spradley, 1980). The expanded field notes provided detailed, rich descriptions



of the observed events. Once the field notes were transcribed, the researcher made copies and kept them in a secure file for coding and development of themes.

### **Artifacts**

Artifacts are a way to support the data collected (Patton, 2002). When going to general education, each student took a “Mainstream Note” (See Appendix H) with them. This note listed the five Positive Behavior Support behaviors implemented throughout the school: responsible, reliable, ready, responsible, and resilient. General education teachers marked either “yes” or “no” for each behavior trait for each general education subject attended. The teachers sometimes also commented on what specific behavior was observed to get a “no” check. This daily note served as communication tool between general education and special education teachers. It also corresponded to positive behavior supports and negative consequences in the special education classroom. For example, if a student received all “yes” checks on his/her note, he/she earned rewards in the special education classroom. If a student received “no” checks, the student lost some privileges in the special education classroom. This serves as an effective and consistent intervention for students to support positive choices.

### **Informal Interviews**

Informal interviews with the student participants were conducted after each observation (See Appendix I). This served the dual purpose of corroborating data collected and also furthering the researcher’s understanding of the students’ perspectives (Yin, 2009). Students were prompted to talk about what had happened during the observation and what behaviors either led to success or difficulty in the general education setting. Additionally, on three separate occasions when the

researcher did not observe, informal interviews were conducted with students using the “Mainstream Note” as a guide. Students discussed what happened in general education that day and talked about their behavior.

### **Fieldwork Journal**

A fieldwork journal was kept for the duration of the research. The researcher was the special education teacher of the participating students. The journal is a way to record personal observations, thoughts, feelings, and questions throughout the study. This serves as a tool to detect and explore any biases (Spradley, 1980) and also serves as a data source (Patton, 2002).

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study was collected through formal and informal interviews, direct observations, collection of artifacts, and review of archival records. The researcher analyzed data throughout the course of this study by separating, sorting, synthesizing, and qualitative coding. Initial analysis helped guide the subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2006).

Spradley (1980) outlines several ways to analyze data including domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis. Spradley states that data collection is only the first step and “in order to move on and describe the cultural behavior, the cultural artifacts, and the cultural knowledge, you must discover the patterns that exist in your data” (p. 85).

### **Constant Comparative Method**

The constant comparative method involves making comparisons to data previously collected throughout the study. This allows the researcher to look for

similarities and relationships that exist within the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell & Clark, 2010). The constant comparative method was ongoing throughout the research process. Once data was collected, the researcher looked for patterns, coded the data, and developed themes.

### **Domain Analysis**

A domain analysis looks for cover terms, included terms, and the semantic relationship connecting such terms. This type of analysis allows the researcher to look for patterns, domains, and patterns across domains (Spradley, 1980). The researcher took notes during each observation about the environment and transcribed interviews. A domain analysis worksheet was made for each data piece to find cover terms, included terms, and find the semantic relationship.

### **Taxonomic Analysis**

A taxonomic analysis was also completed for data collected. A taxonomy shows how parts are related to the whole. It shows the relationships between all included terms (Spradley, 1980). In this study, the researcher used domain analyses from across data pieces to complete taxonomic analyses of the student data, teacher data, and the combined data.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a way to establish reliability and validity within the naturalistic research paradigm. Its aim is to show that research findings are “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p.290). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba state that traditional research criteria are inappropriate for naturalistic research. In social settings, if one already knew the truth, there would be no need to examine it further. Four criteria are

needed to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Table 2 explores reliability and validity through trustworthiness.

**Table 2: Conventional vs. Naturalist Criteria**

Conventional	Naturalist
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

### **Credibility**

Credibility involves establishing that the findings of the study are truthful and credible. Credibility can be demonstrated through various activities in the field such as: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Prolonged Engagement.** The first technique to establish credibility as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is prolonged engagement. Prolonged engagement at the research site being studied involves learning the “culture”, examining distortions, and building trust (p. 301). The researcher in this study was the special education teacher of the student participants and has worked with them in previous school years. The same is true of the staff participants in the study. The researcher was immersed in the culture of the school, has established trust with participants, and examined possible distortions through examination of the journal entries completed throughout the research process.

**Persistent Observation.** Persistent observation provides depth to the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the “purpose of persistent observation is to identify

those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (p. 304). Through direct observation and interviews, the researcher examined and analyzed emerging ideas of importance and revisited them throughout the research process.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation of data increases the probability that research findings will be deemed credible. Triangulation of data means using several different data sources while collecting research. In this study, the researcher collected field notes, formal and informal interviews, archival records, and artifacts to establish triangulation of data and to increase the overall credibility of the study.

**Peer Debriefing.** Peer debriefing is the process of “exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit in the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 308). The process of peer debriefing helps keep the researcher “honest” (p. 308). Through the task of peer debriefing, the researcher can clarify data and hypotheses and determine next steps needed. Peer debriefing was completed with colleagues of the researcher, one who is the K-2 special education teacher, one who is the EI Program social worker, and one who is a second grade general education teacher.

**Member Checks.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member checks are the most critical technique for establishing credibility. Member checks involve going over the data collected, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants in the study. Informal interviews were conducted with student participants after each

observation to ensure the information collected was accurate. Teachers will be able to read interview transcripts and field notes to confirm truthfulness of collected data.

### **Transferability**

Establishing transferability is the second technique used to establish trustworthiness. Naturalist studies report on participants within a certain context and time period, making it impossible to determine whether the same findings could be found with a different set of contexts and participants. However, thick descriptions of the context and data allow for the possibility of transferability to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Dependability**

Dependability is the third technique used to establish trustworthiness. Dependability supports the reliability of the study. To determine if the study is dependable, overlap methods and the use of auditors may be used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The auditors in this study were comprised of the researcher's committee members. They helped verify the researcher's data collection, analysis, and theory development.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is also used to build trustworthiness in a study. It is linked with objectivity. To establish confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest utilizing the audit trail process, triangulation, and keeping a reflexive journal. Even though the researcher followed all legal and ethical steps in conducting research, the data collected and analyzed was still subject to the researcher's own interpretations. Confirmability of this study was determined through using the researcher's committee members as

outside auditors. They were given access to all raw data, transcriptions, and interpretations, allowing outsider triangulation and confirmability of data to be determined. The audit trail showed clear paths between all stages of the study. The researcher also kept a reflexive journal during the research process. The reflexive journal provides “data about the human instrument” (p. 327). Entries will include the researcher’s thoughts, questions, and research decisions throughout the study.

### **Chapter Three: Summary**

Chapter three discussed the ethnographic, case-study format to be used in this study. The research paradigm, questions, setting, definition of the population and sample, and selection and protection of participants were discussed. Data collection methods were explored, including handling of the data, data analysis, and establishing trustworthiness. The findings of this study will be reported in chapter four.

## Chapter Four: Data Analysis

### Introduction

This research study examined teacher and student experiences and perspectives of inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. This chapter provides detailed description of the data collected during the study. Data was collected through formal and informal interviews, observations, artifact collection, and case study comparison. A theory of what factors lead to successful inclusive education for students with emotional impairments was then developed.

The data collected in this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are students with emotional impairments perceptions of being included in the general education/inclusive classroom?
2. What are teachers' views/perceptions of having students with emotional impairments in their general education classrooms?
3. What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

### Background of Student Participants

All students participating in this study were placed in a special education classroom for students with emotional impairments. Although each has varying strengths and needs, it was decided by the Multi-disciplinary team that the behavior/emotional needs were the primary impairment (need) of each student. All participants spend part of their day in a special education classroom and part of their day in a general education classroom. Students were chosen to be participants based on their placement in the special education classroom, parent permission, and grouping within general education classrooms. All students were given pseudonyms for the



purpose of protecting identities. Table 3 provides a summary of each student, certification, services, and time spent in general education.

**Table 3: Participant Summary**

Student	Gender	Grade & Teacher	Number of years in Program	Special Ed Certification	Special Ed Services	Daily Percentage of Time Inside General Education
Shaun Jones (SJ)	M	4 Mrs. Nelson	5	Emotionally Impaired	Social Work	40-79%
Summer Stine (SS)	F	4 Mrs. Brady	1.5	Emotionally Impaired	Social Work	40-79%
Dustin Jackson (DJ)	M	4 Mrs. Nelson	2	Emotionally Impaired	Social Work, Speech/Language	40-79%
Amelia Duncan (AD)	F	4 Mrs. Brady	5	Emotionally Impaired	Social Work Speech/Lang	Less than 40%
Benjamin Bates (BB)	M	5 Mrs. Michaels	6	Other Health Impairment	Social Work	40-79%

The researcher received more participants than needed for this study. Purposive sampling was used to limit the number of student participants to five. Students were chosen based on placement in general education classrooms, to allow for groupings of students within the same classroom when possible. The five students selected were placed among three general education classrooms.

**Shaun Jones.** Shaun is a nine-year-old fourth grade student. He is outgoing and enjoys all outdoor sports. When asked to tell the researcher about himself, Shaun replied, "I wakeboard and snowboard a lot. Um, and I got a bunch of friends." Shaun has an engaging personality and often jokes with classmates and teachers. He lives

with his parents and younger sister. Shaun is motivated to go to mainstream, but often feels overwhelmed by the amount of daily work assigned. In the initial student interview, Shaun commented about not always liking mainstream because of “Lots of work. My least favorite thing in the world.” Shaun is under the care of a psychiatrist and takes medication for focus. Shaun’s mood can vary from easy going to explosive and paranoid. His behavioral outbursts have lessened in frequency each year in the EI program, but are still cause for concern. Shaun can get panicked when feeling overwhelmed or upset and has engaged in paranoid/unrealistic thinking at times. Shaun’s parents are very involved in his life and provide him with academic support and several outside opportunities for socialization with his peers.

Shaun was re-evaluated by the school district’s multi-disciplinary evaluation team in January 2012. He was found to have low-average intellectual capabilities (Full Scale IQ Standard Score of 85). Educational testing found Shaun to have average to low-average scores in reading, writing, and math. Adaptive skills found to be in the at-risk range were: hyperactivity, anxiety, depression, attention, learning, atypicality, and overall behavioral symptoms.

The following information is a summary of Shaun’s Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) on his most recent IEP:

*Shaun is a 9-year-old boy who is eligible for special services under the Emotionally Impaired eligibility category. Shaun was moved to the EI Program in kindergarten due to behavioral concerns and has since made great progress both academically and socially. Shaun has mainstreamed this year for science, reading, math, and some specials. Shaun often feels overwhelmed with the workload and it at times causes anxiety and behavioral issues. Shaun knows many coping skills and is able to use them most times to move on eventually. Shaun very much wants to do well, and this anxiety can at times lead to big behaviors (unsafe, oppositional, unrealistic thinking). Shaun is working on moving on when upset in a timely manner and accepting adult help when upset.*

*This impacts Shaun's ability to progress socially and academically in the general education setting without modifications and supports. Shaun continues to benefit from the social/emotional support of a self-contained EI placement, where coping skills and behaviors for academic/social success are emphasized.*

Based on Shaun's current needs, the following IEP goal/objectives were developed and are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Shaun's IEP Goals**

<b>Measurable Annual Goal:</b>	Shaun will utilize a coping skill with a prompt to enable him to deal with feelings or complete challenging or disliked activities.		
<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Schedule for Evaluation</b>
Shaun will utilize an appropriate coping skill to persevere when frustrated academically or socially within 15 minutes of initial upset.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	75%	Monthly
Shaun will accept adult help when frustrated/upset	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	75%	Monthly

**Summer Stine.** Summer is a nine-year-old fourth grade student. Summer is a friendly and helpful student. Summer lives with her maternal grandparents. Her birth mother died when Summer was an infant and her father does not have any custodial rights. Summer is in regular contact with her half-brother, who is sixteen. Summer engages easily with adults and seeks out attention from female staff members, often making comments about fashion or seeking approval for her work. Summer also has age-appropriate friendships with both special and general education peers. More recently, Summer has demonstrated a negative attitude about herself and life in general. Summer attends mainstream, but does not always enjoy going. When asked about how she feels about going to mainstream, Summer reported feeling "annoyed 'cause of all the work they have there". These behaviors were evident at her home-

school and reason for transfer to the EI program. Summer would often engage in self-injurious/negative attention-seeking behavior (scissors to neck, head slammed in desk). This has impacted her overall success both academically and socially.

Summer was initially evaluated by the Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation Team in April 2011. She was found to have average intellectual abilities (Full Scale IQ Standard Score 102) and performed in the average to low average range on educational testing. Angel is approaching grade level in reading and has mainstreamed for reading, science, and some specials.

The following information is a summary of Summer's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) on her most recent IEP:

*Summer is a 9-year-old fourth grade student who receives special education support under the emotionally impaired eligibility category. Summer was moved to the EI program in March of her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade year due to persistent behavioral concerns in general education. Summer has made great progress since coming to the program. She knows many coping skills and has increased her time in mainstream. Summer knows 16 coping skills and is much more able and willing to engage in discussions about her behavior. Although Summer knows many coping skills, she continues to work on using them in the moment of frustration. At times her negative attitude impacts her ability to move on or try something new. This impacts Summer's ability to progress academically and socially without modifications and support. Summer continues to benefit from placement in an EI setting, where coping skills and skills for academic and social success are emphasized.*

Based on Summer's current needs, the following IEP goal/objectives were developed and are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Summer's IEP Goals**

<b>Measurable Annual Goal:</b>	Summer will use coping skills when frustrated in order to participate academically or socially.		
<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Schedule for Evaluation</b>
When engaging in negative self-talk, Summer will stop with a prompt and model appropriate self-	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly

talk.			
When upset, Summer will use a coping skill with a prompt to move on within 10 minutes.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	80%	Monthly
Summer will identify positive thoughts and ideas for a given situation.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly

**Dustin Jackson.** Dustin is an eleven-year-old fourth grade student. He is a bright boy, but can be socially awkward with adults and peers. Dustin lives with both parents, however, his mother is often out of town for work. There have been several home changes recently that have seemed to have a negative impact on Dustin's overall behavior. Dustin spent his third grade year in the program with much success and was returned to his home-school. Unfortunately, he was unable to experience much success in that setting and returned to the EI program in December of his fourth grade year. He seems to be much happier back in the program and has resumed mainstreaming for all subjects. When asked to describe himself, Dustin stated, "My name is Dustin. I come to school to do work." Dustin is a black/white thinker and has a hard time with abstract concepts. Dustin continues to struggle with appropriate ways to seek attention from peers and sustaining friendships. Dustin loves to ride his bike and to play racing games, but reports that he often plays alone.

Dustin was evaluated by the Multi-Disciplinary Team in October 2010 and was found to have average intellectual capabilities, but below-average expressive language skills, which impacts him across the curriculum. Academic testing showed that Dustin performs in the average range for reading, writing, and math.

The following information is a summary of Dustin's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) on his most recent IEP:

*Dustin receives special education support under the emotionally impaired eligibility category. Dustin also receives social work and speech/language services. Dustin was moved from the EI program in the fall because he met his goals and successfully graduated from the program. Upon his return to the general education classroom, he has regressed to old behaviors and has demonstrated an inability to successfully function in the classroom with peers and teachers. Dustin's behavior at his home-school has escalated since returning this fall. He struggles with peer interactions and using skills to solve problems. Dustin has difficulty stopping a behavior when asked. This impacts Dustin's ability to progress in the general education curriculum without modifications and support. Dustin will benefit from placement in a self-contained setting where skills for academic and social functioning are emphasized.*

Based on Dustin's current needs, the following IEP goal/objectives were developed and are shown in Table 6.

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**Table 6: Dustin's IEP Goals**

<b>Measurable Annual Goal:</b>	Dustin will utilize learned coping skills to demonstrate responsible behavior for learning and interacting across settings.		
<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Schedule for Evaluation</b>
Dustin will stop a behavior when asked.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	80%	Monthly
Dustin will identify and/or model 1-2 positive ways to gain attention from peers.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	80%	Monthly
Dustin will use coping skills with a prompt to express feelings and solve problems with peers.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly

**Amelia Duncan.** Amelia is a nine-year-old fourth grade student. She is shy and hesitant to talk or participate academically or socially, although her mom reports she is quite talkative at home. Amelia was born with a cleft lip and palate and received corrective surgery as an infant. Amelia is an only-child and her parents are divorced. She lives with her mother and visits her dad on a regular basis. Amelia likes to do well and enjoys helping teachers and other students. She is involved in softball and baton outside of school and reports liking these activities. Amelia can become easily frustrated

at school and will cry or shut-down. She is very quiet and hesitant to ask for help when needed. When asked if she felt comfortable in mainstream, Amelia replied, “a little bit.” This year, she has been able to attend reading and math in mainstream. This was a big step for her and Amelia is proud of her success.

A Multi-Disciplinary Team evaluation was completed in January 2012. Amelia was found to have low average cognitive abilities (Full Scale IQ Standard Score 84). When compared to peers her age, Amelia was found to be low average for reading and writing skills and average for math calculation and reasoning. On her speech/language evaluation, results revealed average receptive language with reduced expressive language in the areas of sentence formulation and articulation.

The following information is a summary of Amelia’s Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) on his most recent IEP:

*Amelia is a nine-year-old student, who is currently in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Amelia receives special education services under the Emotionally Impaired eligibility category and receives speech/language and social work support. Amelia was moved to an EI placement in kindergarten due to behavior interfering with her academic and social growth. Amelia has made progress and is able to mainstream for reading and math. Amelia still presents with reduced independent sentence generation. Reduced expressive language negatively impacts Amelia’s ability to effectively express her feelings, wants, and ideas with peers and adults in the educational setting. Amelia has made good progress in learning coping skills and attending to tasks. She is still working on using coping skills when frustrated, accepting re-direction, and participating academically and socially. Amelia continues to benefit from placement in an EI setting, where skills for academic and social success are emphasized.*

Based on Amelia’s current needs, the goals shown in Table 7 were developed.

**Table 7: Amelia’s IEP Goals**

<b>Measurable Annual Goal:</b>	Amelia will use coping skills when frustrated or disappointed in social and academic situations.		
<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Schedule for Evaluation</b>

Amelia will accept redirection without upset.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly
Amelia will use a coping skill with a prompt when frustrated to move on within 10 minutes.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	80%	Monthly
Amelia will use coping skills in order to participate academically and socially.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly

**Benjamin Bates.** Ben is an eleven-year-old, fifth grade student. Benjamin was exposed to drugs prenatally and was delivered prematurely. He also experienced left temporal lobe damage at birth due a stroke and loss of oxygen. In recent years, Ben has had a few seizures and is currently on medication. Benjamin is the youngest of three children and was adopted at age 2.5 years. He sees his biological sister and brother on occasion, but has no contact with his birth parents. Ben is an engaging student with a quick smile and good sense of humor. Benjamin has a positive attitude and tries his best at school. He mainstreams for science, reading, math, and some specials. When asked about his mainstream class, Ben replied, "Well, my mainstream class is pretty great." Benjamin struggles with expressive language and staying organized. Ben can become stuck on certain topics or frustrating situations and has a hard time moving on. Ben can get very teary and upset in these instances and is working on using coping skills to handle strong emotions. Ben demonstrated self-awareness when asked to tell about himself in the initial interview: "Well, I've been crying for a few months, but now I'm changing into a more mature person." Ben reports having many friends, but most are surface relationships. He feels well liked and accepted at school.



A Multi-Disciplinary team evaluation was completed in November 2012. Benjamin was found to have low-average intellectual capabilities (Full Scale IQ 88). Ben performed in the low-average to high-average range on educational testing. Ben is reading above grade level, but struggles with writing and math reasoning.

The following information is a summary of Benjamin's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) on his most recent IEP:

*Benjamin is a ten-year-old, fifth grade student who receives special education support under the Otherwise Health Impaired category due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Benjamin has received special services since age 1.5 years and was moved to the EI program in kindergarten to work more specially on his behavior. Ben has not cried often this fall, but does engage in negative self-talk when frustrated. Benjamin is often confused and becomes frustrated and overwhelmed. This impacts Ben's ability to progress socially and academically without accommodations and support. Benjamin continues to benefit from a self-contained EI placement where coping skills and strategies for success are emphasized. Ben is diagnosed with ADHD and OCD and currently takes medication for both and also for seizures. Ben has suffered from seizures on/off his entire life. Benjamin is more off-task this fall and engages in silly type behaviors (i.e. dancing during instruction). Ben is easily distracted, often off-task/off-topic, confused about what to do and a slow worker. Benjamin will need more wait time to allow for processing and reduced assignments.*

Based on Benjamin's current needs the IEP goals shown in Table 8 were developed.

**Table 8: Benjamin's IEP Goals**

<b>Measurable Annual Goal:</b>	Benjamin will use a coping skill with a prompt to maintain self-control when frustrated academically or socially.		
<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Schedule for Evaluation</b>
When engaging in negative self-talk, Ben will stop with a prompt and model appropriate self-talk.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	80%	Monthly
Ben will identify and use a coping skill with a prompt when academically frustrated.	Documented Observation, daily behavior sheets	70%	Monthly

## Background of Teacher Participants

Three general education (mainstream) teachers participated in this research study. Teachers were chosen based to participate based on the placement of students from the EI classroom in their classrooms. The three teachers have all had students mainstreamed into their classrooms prior to this school year. Teachers were given pseudonyms to keep their identities confidential.

**Hannah Michaels.** Mrs. Michaels has been teaching for 20 years, spending the majority of her teaching career in a fifth grade classroom. She has her bachelor's degree in Elementary Teaching and her master's in Curriculum and Instruction. Mrs. Michaels participated in the district's "model-teacher" program for several years, allowing other teachers to come into her classroom to see her teach reading and writing workshop. She has a positive attitude towards teaching and is a leader amongst the staff. Mrs. Michaels has participated in inclusive teaching for students with emotional impairments for three years.

The following excerpt was taken from the Initial Teacher Interview:

*Researcher: Describe yourself as a teacher; what kind of teacher are you?*

*HM: I'd say I have high expectations for my students. And I um, I'm very academic. I think over the years. I used to be more creative, but with the way that things have gone, I feel like I hold them to really high standards with what we have to cover.*

**Sophia Brady.** Mrs. Brady has been teaching for 19 years, all of which have been spent in a fourth grade classroom. Mrs. Brady has a calm presence with students and staff. She has her bachelor's and master's degrees in Education. Mrs. Brady has participated in inclusive teaching with students with emotional impairments for three

years. Mrs. Brady describes her philosophy of teaching in the following excerpt from the Initial Teacher Interview:

*Researcher: If you had to describe the kind of teacher you are, what would you say?*

*SB: Um, with kids, I guess I'm a fairly organized, I'm always looking for new things that...like I try to evaluate myself so that if something doesn't work, I try and figure out what I could do differently. For example, we are doing these summaries and so I started a new thing and I told them how I would do it, but I left off one section that I didn't specifically tell them and so I told them today, I said, well, we're going to go backwards, we're going to do this.*

**Jenny Nelson.** Mrs. Nelson has been teaching for 24 years. She has an early childhood bachelor's degree and master's degree in counseling. Mrs. Nelson has taught pre-school, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade. She was a school counselor for several years before the district cut elementary counselors due to budget constraints. Mrs. Nelson is the co-chair of the school's Positive Behavior Support committee and is a member of the school Leadership Team. She has worked with students with emotional impairments in her classroom for 2 years.

The following excerpt was taken from the Initial Teacher Interview in response to the question to describe the kind of teacher she is:

*JN: What kind of teacher am I? Well, I think I am a hands-on teacher. I think there are days that I'm a good teacher and days that I'm not such a good teacher. Put that in there. I'm enthusiastic, I think outgoing, um, I think classroom management if one of my strengths. I, if I don't know something, I'm a lifelong learner, so I'll do my best to learn what I don't know. I like to think that I'm inclusive, that I work to try to assist kids in developing in all areas so that they are able to feel good about themselves, even in those areas that they themselves don't excel.*

## Data Analysis

### Initial Analysis

Data collected in this study included formal interviews with students and teachers, informal interviews with students, observations, collection of artifacts, and review of archival records. The researcher analyzed data throughout the course of this study by separating, sorting, synthesizing, and qualitative coding. Initial analysis helped guide the subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2006). Initial coding is meant to be open-ended, allowing the researcher to see what the data reveals and what direction it will lead subsequent analysis (Salana, 2009). According to Charmaz (2006), The goal of initial coding is “to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data” (p. 46).

After analyzing each data piece separately using initial coding/domain searching, the data was then compared across similar data sets (i.e. initial student interviews) to look for similar phrases and themes. According to Spradley (1980), “You must discover the patterns that exist in your data” (p. 85). Similar patterns and themes that emerged from analysis were then compared across all data sets, using the constant comparative method and creating taxonomies. The constant comparative method involves making comparisons to data previously collected throughout the study. This allows the researcher to look for similarities and relationships that exist within the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell & Clark, 2010). The constant comparative method was ongoing throughout the research process.

The data analysis will be broken down into three sections: student data analysis, teacher analysis, and then combined analysis.

## **Analysis of Student Data**

In the initial interviews with students, four main domains emerged from the data: the use of coping skills, positive feelings about mainstream, negative feelings about mainstream, and awareness of IEP goals and objectives. Some of the questions were deemed too abstract for the students (i.e. “Tell me how the learning in your two classes is the same.”). The ethnographic design of this study with the researcher as a participant observer and as a member of the culture being explored appeared to be an asset during the student interviews. The established relationship between the researcher as teacher of the student participants allowed the researcher to read non-verbal cues of students and to paraphrase the wording of questioning when needed.

Structural coding was used as another way of looking at and confirming the data. It helped with development of domains and also served as a way to verify themes across data. Structural coding “applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question...” (Saldana, 2009, p. 66). It “both codes and initially categorizes the data corpus” (Saldana, 2009, p. 67).

## **Coping Skills**

Coping skills are ways to deal with upsetting feelings and are explicitly taught in the EI classroom and school social work sessions. Students’ IEP goals and objectives relate to coping skills and the ability to use them.

Terms that supported the structural code were underlined. The following excerpts from initial student interviews illustrates the use of structural coding based on the domain “coping skills”:

Research Question:

- What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

Structural Code: **Coping Skills**

### Student 1: Shaun Jones

*Researcher: What helps you the best/most at school?*

*SJ: My fish that Ms. M. let me borrow.*

*Researcher: Okay, so that stuffed animal. So that's kind of a coping skill that works for you.*

*SJ: Yeah*

*Researcher: Okay, so do you feel more comfortable now, going?*

*SJ: Yeah, in 1<sup>st</sup> grade mainstream...I was, this kid used to sit next to me and bother me all the time and I didn't really like it. But I just, I just ignored him and now actually we're really good friends.*

*Researcher: Okay, tell me what being successful in general education means to you. If I said to you, you had a successful day, what would that mean? What does that look like?*

*SJ: Oh, look at me, I just got a B on my math test or...*

*Researcher: So, good grades? What else does it mean?*

*SJ: Trying something new and doing it.*

*Researcher: What happens during the school day to make it a good day?*

*SJ: Mmm, you get paid on Fridays if you have enough money you can buy stuff.*

*Researcher: Okay, what behaviors do you do to make it a good day for yourself?*

*SJ: If someone is bothering me, I walk away.*

*Researcher: Okay.*

*SJ: And I don't like, let's say, if you say "do this assignment" I don't go like this: "Nooo!" I just go like this, "Um, okay."*

*Researcher: Okay, good.*

*SJ: I might just do parts of it.*

*Researcher: Okay, so you take one step at a time?*

*SJ: Yeah*

### Student 2: Summer Stine

*RESEARCHER: Okay. Anything else about this class?*

*SS: We have some feelings charts and coping skills.*

*SS: Well, instead of learning like in my mainstream class, instead of learning about coping skills, we learn about different things.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay.*

SS: *In Ms. M's, we learn about coping skills*

RESEARCHER: *Tell me what being successful in mainstream means to you.*

SS: *Being good.*

RESEARCHER: *What does that look like?*

SS: *Like, all eyes on the teacher and listen to the words.*

RESEARCHER: *Okay. Are you successful in mainstream?*

SS: *Yes.*

RESEARCHER: *Why?*

SS: *'Cause I always listen.*

RESEARCHER: *You always listen, okay. How do you know when you are successful?*

SS: *Cause I get all yesses on my sheet. (Resiliency is on the mainstream sheet and a coping skill)*

### Student 3: Dustin Jackson

RESEARCHER: *What else do we talk about a lot in here or focus on?*

DJ: *coping skills.*

RESEARCHER: *So tell me about that, coping skills.*

DJ: *Whenever I get upset, I use coping skills.*

RESEARCHER: *Okay, so that does help you have a good day at school? Does that help you get yesses on your note?*

DJ: *Yes*

RESEARCHER: *Tell me more about these coping skills. What are they? Give me some examples.*

DJ: *Laugh it out. Discover your choices.*

RESEARCHER: *Which ones work the best for you?*

DJ: *Hmm, deep breath.*

RESEARCHER: *Deep breath. Where do you use coping skills?*

DJ: *In school or out.*

RESEARCHER: *okay, good. Have you been using them in mainstream?*

DJ: *Yeah.*

RESEARCHER: *Do you think that they help you out?*

DJ: *Yep.*

### Student 4: Amelia Duncan

RESEARCHER: *Is there anything you can tell me about our class? What we do in our class, what we learn in our class?*

AD: *We learn.*

RESEARCHER: *What do we learn about?*

AD: *Math*

RESEARCHER: *What else?*

AD: *Cursive. Mmm..*

RESEARCHER: *What else?*

*AD: Coping skills.*

*RESEARCHER: Coping skills, okay*

### **Student 5: Benjamin Bates**

*RESEARCHER: How/in what ways do your teachers help you?*

*BB: You help me with my coping skills.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay. Alright, what about Mrs. Michael's?*

*BB: Well, she just makes some things in math.*

*RESEARCHER: What helps you the best/most at school?*

*BB: The coping skills.*

*RESEARCHER: Alright, tell me a little bit about those coping skills. What do you mean by that?*

*BB: Well, they're helpful for kids so they can have awesome days.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay, when would you use them?*

*BB: Whenever I'm upset.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay, and can you give me a few examples?*

*BB: Well, when I got, when in music I made a couple of mistakes and I dealt with it and accepted the consequence.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay, good. So accepting consequences is a coping skill.*

*What's another coping skill you might use?*

*BB: Deep breaths.*

In the formal interviews, the researcher asked questions focusing on student perceptions of being included in the general education classrooms. Final student interview questions were developed as a result of initial data analysis of all data pieces. The questions allowed for clarification and expansion of emerging themes.

A total of six informal interviews were conducted with each student after each of the three classroom observation (three times per student) about mainstream and student perception of success. This served as a Member Check with student participants as well. Informal interviews were also conducted with each student on three occasions when the researcher did not observe, using the "Mainstream Note" as a guide. Students were prompted to discuss what happened in general education that day and talk about their behavior. These three categories of data highlighted the differences



and similarities between students. Excerpts included below are from the formal interviews, one informal interview based on observation, and one informal interview when the researcher did not observe, using the Mainstream Note as a guide. Data is presented in a case-study format, highlighting each student separately, then the data was converged.

### **Student 1: Shaun Jones**

#### **Final Interview**

*RESEARCHER: Okay, How do you feel about going to mainstream?*

*SJ: I feel between bad and good about it. In the middle.*

*RESEARCHER: What are the good parts?*

*SJ: The good parts are when you get all of your work done, you feel really good about yourself and Mrs. N just lets you read for a little bit when you're done.*

*RESEARCHER: And what are the parts you don't feel so good about?*

*SJ: I don't feel so good about the work in there because sometimes the work can be really hard for me to do.*

#### **Informal Interviews After Observation**

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.*

*SJ: I was trying to get my reading spiral done for the Titanic before our book club meeting tomorrow.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?*

*SJ: Yes.*

*RESEARCHER: How do you know?*

*SJ: Mrs. Nelson was very impressed with my writing.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?*

*SJ: Yes. I wasn't mean to the teacher.*

*RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?*

*SJ: All yesses. I was the 5 R's.*

#### **Informal Interview with Mainstream Note**

#### **Figure 4.1 Shaun's Mainstream Note**

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name: Shaun Date: 6-5-13

Didn't finish review -  
never chance you group can go over it!

Expectation	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAPES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Respectful					✓							
Responsible					✓							
Resilient					✓							
Ready					✓							
Reliable					✓							

Comments/Homework:

**RESEARCHER:** Tell me about what just happened in general education.

**SJ:** We were doing an experiment. How to create an electromagnet.

**RESEARCHER:** What subject did you attend?

**SJ:** Science.

**RESEARCHER:** Were you successful academically? How do you know?

**SJ:** Yes. I got most of my work done.

**RESEARCHER:** Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?

**SJ:** Yes. I ignored kids when they were bothering me.

**RESEARCHER:** Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

**SJ:** I got all yesses in mainstream. I was the 5 R's.

Work being hard and having too much homework was a continual theme from interactions with Shaun. He does get a sense of pride when his work is finished and associates it with academic success. Not getting it done seems to contribute to a negative view of general education and even himself at times. Shaun associated behavioral success with being respectful (not being mean) and using coping skills (ignoring people who were bothering him). He also knows that being successful in mainstream means "being all 5 R's". The 5 R's refer to the Positive Behavior Support traits that are taught and reinforced school-wide.

## Student 2: Summer Stine

### Final Formal Interview

RESEARCHER: How do you feel about going to mainstream?

SS: Annoyed.

RESEARCHER: And, why do you feel annoyed?

SS: Cause of all the work they have.

RESEARCHER: Okay. And you just mentioned to me that you're trying to get more mainstream. Can you explain that?

SS: I'm trying to get more mainstream so I can go back to my original school.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so you can graduate?

SS: Hmm-hmm.

RESEARCHER: And how do you feel once you're in the classroom for mainstream?

SS: Happy that I got there.

**Informal Interviews After Observation**

RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.

SS: We were doing a science experiment with a battery.

RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?

SS: Yes.

RESEARCHER: How do you know?

SS: I participated.

RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?

SS: Yes. I didn't argue with my group.

RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

SS: All yesses, no no's.

**Informal Interviews with Mainstream Note**

**Figure 4.2 Summer's Mainstream Note**

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name: Summer Date: 6-3-13

	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAPES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Expectation												
Respectful	✓				✓							
Responsible	✓				✓							
Resilient	✓				✓							
Ready		✓			✓							
Reliable	✓				✓							

Comments/Homework:

Better w/ notes today. :)  
 \* gave her a set of my notes of a study guide to due (hus)

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.*

*SS: I took notes.*

*RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?*

*SS: Science*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?*

*SS: Yes.*

*RESEARCHER: How do you know?*

*SS: I got all yesses and I took notes.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?*

*SS: Yes. I got all yesses. I was the 5 R's.*

*RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?*

*SS: (pointed to teacher comment: "Better w/notes today") It feels good.*

Summer indicated that she is annoyed going to mainstream due to the amount of work. However, she also is happy that is there because she knows that going to mainstream is a step towards "graduating" from the EI program and returning to her home-school, in a less restrictive setting. Summer mentioned doing her work and not arguing as evidence of success, which tie directly to her IEP goals. Summer also indicated that she knows being all 5 R's is part of being successful in mainstream and that it "feels good" to do well.

### **Student 3: Dustin Jackson**

#### **Final Formal Interview**

*RESEARCHER: So, your teacher is Mrs. Nelson.*

*DJ: Yeah*

*RESEARCHER: And you go for...*

*DJ: math, reading, writing, social studies, science.*

*RESEARCHER: Good, you go for a lot.*

*RESEARCHER: And, How do you feel about going to mainstream?*

*DJ: Happy.*

*RESEARCHER: Happy. How do you feel once in the classroom? In mainstream, how do you feel?*

*DJ: Proud.*

#### **Informal Interview after Observation**

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.*

*DJ: I was working hard on cutting the geometric shapes and words.*

RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?

DJ: Math

RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?

DJ: Yes.

RESEARCHER: How do you know?

DJ: I was calm.

RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?

DJ: Yes. I had all yesses on my note.

RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

DJ: All yesses. I was good. I had friendly behavior.

### Informal Interview with Mainstream Note

Figure 4.3 Dustin's Mainstream Note

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name: Dustin Date: 5/21/13

Expectation	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAFES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Respectful	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Responsible	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Resilient	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Ready	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Reliable	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	

Comments from parent: Read - RT part for fluency  
Integers worksheet  
Science Vocab Quiz Wed 5/22  
 Sat by Shawn  
 Speech: a lot of negative talk about self and other student from classroom.

RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.

DJ: I was not ready.

RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?

DJ: Social Studies.

RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?

DJ: No.

RESEARCHER: How do you know?

DJ: I wasn't prepared.

RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?

DJ: I was mostly calm until my tooth started hurting.

RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

*DJ: I had a yes for respectful. I had a no for responsible. I was not responsible because I didn't have my map. I was resilient because I moved on. I was not ready because I left my map at home. I was reliable.*

Dustin associates mainstream with feelings of happiness and pride. He is mainstreamed for much of the day and finds the work “easy”. Perhaps this is why Dustin enjoys going to mainstream. Dustin associates doing well behaviorally with his IEP goals (i.e. friendly behavior). Dustin also knows how the 5 R PBS traits on the mainstream note correlate with his success.

#### **Student 4: Amelia Duncan**

##### **Final Formal Interview**

*RESEARCHER: Tell me again about your general education class.*

*AD: There's 23 kids.*

*RESEARCHER: And who's your teacher?*

*AD: Mrs. Brady*

*RESEARCHER: How do you feel about going to mainstream?*

*AD: Good.*

*RESEARCHER: How do you feel once in the classroom?*

*AD: A little bit shy.*

##### **Informal Interview After Observation**

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.*

*AD: I was doing writing and reading. I was at a group. We talked about the book, Skinny Bones.*

*RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?*

*AD: Language Arts.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?*

*AD: Yes.*

*RESEARCHER: How do you know?*

*AD: I did my work. I participated.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?*

*AD: Yes. I wasn't mean.*

*RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?*

*AD: I got all yesses. I did good.*

##### **Informal Interview with Mainstream Note**

**Figure 4.4 Amelia's Mainstream Note**

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name: Amelia Date: 6-4-13

Expectation	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAPES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Respectful	✓		✓									
Responsible	✓											
Resilient	✓											
Ready	✓											
Reliable	✓											

Comments/Homework: Unit 12 Review not done

*Handwritten notes: "has 3 no's" (circled in blue) and "Unit 12 Review not done" (circled in pink).*

**RESEARCHER:** Tell me about what just happened in general education.

**AD:** I got three no's.

**RESEARCHER:** What subject did you attend?

**AD:** Math.

**RESEARCHER:** Were you successful academically?

**AD:** No.

**RESEARCHER:** How do you know?

**AD:** I didn't finish my homework.

**RESEARCHER:** Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?

**AD:** Yes. I was being good.

**RESEARCHER:** Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

**AD:** I didn't finish my homework so I got three no's.

Amelia indicated that she felt good about going to mainstream. She is a very shy student and hesitant to participate in both the special and general education setting. She associates being successful with participating, which is one her IEP objectives. Amelia is also able to explain how her behavior (not doing homework) leads to "no's" on her note.

### Student 5: Benjamin Bates

#### Formal Final Interview

RESEARCHER: Tell me again about your general education class.  
 BB: Well, I like my mainstream class.  
 RESEARCHER: Okay, what do you like about it?  
 BB: I like it because I get to see lots of friends.  
 RESEARCHER: Okay, How do you feel about going to mainstream?  
 BB: Pretty good.  
 RESEARCHER: How do you feel once in the classroom?  
 BB: Alright, except when I have any homework.  
 RESEARCHER: Then what?  
 BB: I feel upset.  
 RESEARCHER: Okay. How do you handle yourself when you feel upset?  
 BB: I try not to cry.  
 RESEARCHER: Okay, good.

### Informal Interview After Observation

RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.  
 BB: We were working on the math review. I had a little problem getting it done and I didn't want to finish it.  
 RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?  
 BB: Math.  
 RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?  
 BB: Yes.  
 RESEARCHER: How do you know?  
 BB: I took a few deep breaths and did my work.  
 RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?  
 BB: Yes. I didn't cry.  
 RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?  
 BB: All yesses on note.

### Informal Interview with Mainstream Note

Figure 4.5 Ben's Mainstream Note

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name: Ben Date: 5-28-13

	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAPES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Expectation												
Respectful				✓								✓
Responsible			✓									✓
Resilient				✓								✓
Ready			✓									✓
Reliable			✓									✓

Comments/Homework: Some late - we will do more practice + it ran over. I'm sending Ben back for a bit to work on his math. He's having a rough time + seems very frustrated.

376-377 circled ones only



*RESEARCHER: What subject did you attend?*

*BB: Math.*

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about what just happened in general education.*

*BB: It was kind of rough.*

*RESEARCHER: Why?*

*BB: Because of my attitude. I was very negative. I said negative things about myself. I said I was stupid.*

*RESEARCHER: Why were you feeling that way?*

*BB: I broke a pencil while sharpening it. I was upset and angry at myself.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful academically?*

*BB: Not that much. I was too busy getting mad at myself.*

*BB: I took a few deep breaths and did my work.*

*RESEARCHER: Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?*

*BB: No. I was so upset and was saying negative comments about myself.*

*RESEARCHER: Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?*

*BB: I have two No's: respectful and resilient. I wasn't that resilient and said negative things to myself.*

Benjamin indicated that he has friends in mainstream and feels good about going to class. Ben does not like having homework. Ben mentioned both using coping skills (deep breath) and awareness of his IEP goals in his interviews (negative self-talk).

### **Student Perceptions About Mainstream**

After analyzing initial and final formal interviews as well as informal interviews for each student, themes emerged as student perceptions towards being included in general education. Student perceptions about mainstream are included in Table 9.

**Table 9: Student Perceptions About Mainstream**

<b>Shaun</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Dustin</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually boring</li> <li>• Funny teacher</li> <li>• A lot of work</li> <li>• Teachers help</li> <li>• More Rules</li> <li>• Feels good with good grades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a lot</li> <li>• Not that fun</li> <li>• Annoyed about going</li> <li>• Teachers are helpful</li> <li>• Likes getting yes marks on note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels proud to go</li> <li>• Likes getting good notes</li> <li>• Teachers are helpful</li> <li>• Feels work is easy</li> </ul>

<b>Amelia</b>	<b>Ben</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likes going</li> <li>• Feels shy</li> <li>• Feels work is easy</li> <li>• Teachers are helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likes going</li> <li>• Likes to learn</li> <li>• Feels included</li> <li>• Doesn't like homework</li> <li>• Teachers are helpful</li> </ul>	

Three out of the five student participants indicated that they liked going to mainstream. Even with varying attitudes about attending, all five participants expressed feeling of pride about doing well.

### **Common Themes in Informal Interviews**

After analyzing each informal interview separately, coding for themes, the data was compared across students, allowing for common themes and domains to be established. Table 10 illustrates domains found for three main questions in the informal interviews.

**Table 10: Common Themes Across Informal Interviews**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Common Themes</b>
Were you successful academically?	Getting work done. Coping Skills, Awareness of goals
Were you successful behaviorally?	Coping Skills, Awareness of goals, PBS Traits
Show me mainstream note and explain	All 5 R's, "was good", reference to goals, "all yesses"

### **Domain Analysis from Informal Interviews**

A domain analysis looks for cover terms, included terms, and the semantic relationship connecting such terms (Spradley, 1980). Domain analyses were completed for each data set and some examples are shown below. Tables 11 and 12 represent

domain analyses for the cover terms: academic success in mainstream and behavioral success in mainstream.

**Table 11: Domain Analysis for Academic Success**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Getting work done	Contributes to	Academic Success in Mainstream
Using coping skills		
Awareness of IEP Goals		

**Table 12: Domain Analysis for Behavioral Success**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Using coping skills	Contributes to	Behavioral Success in Mainstream
Awareness of IEP Goals		
Showing the PBS 5 R Traits		
Getting all yes marks on note		

Throughout the informal interviews, students showed awareness and understanding that using coping skills, exhibiting the PBS traits, completing work, getting all yes marks on their Mainstream Note, and having an awareness of their IEP goals contributed to both academic and behavioral success in mainstream.

### **Taxonomic Analysis of Student Data**

After coding all data sets, domain analyses were completed. From there, a taxonomy could be completed. A taxonomic analysis shows the relationships between all the included terms established from the domain analyses across data pieces (Spradley, 1980). Table 13 shows a taxonomy based on student perspectives of being included in general education.

**Table 13: Taxonomy: Student Perspectives of Being Included in General Education**

- I. Including Students with Emotional Impairments in General Education
  - A. Student Perceptions
    1. Positives about Mainstream
      - a. Sense of pride
      - b. Some friendships
      - c. Likes subject areas
      - d. Likes doing well
      - e. Relationship with teacher
        - i. Teachers are helpful
        - ii. Likes teacher
    2. Negatives about Mainstream
      - a. Not many friends
      - b. More students
        - i. Less individual attention
      - c. More rules
      - d. In/out of classroom
      - e. More work
        - i. Work is hard
  - B. Factors for Success
    1. Coping skills
      - a. Taught in special education room
      - b. Using coping skills helps with success in mainstream
    2. Awareness of IEP goals
    3. Positive Behavior Support Traits
      - a. Respectful, responsible, reliable, ready, resilient
    4. Relationship with Teacher
      - a. Likes Teacher
      - b. Finds teacher helpful
    5. Feeling Successful
      - a. Getting work done

### **Analysis of Teacher Data**

The teachers involved in this study are active participants in the mainstream process for including students with emotional impairments in their classrooms. Teachers were formally interviewed at the start and end of the research study using open-ended questions that were exploratory in nature. Using the constant comparative method, initial analysis of teacher interviews was compared with data analysis of all student components. This helped inform the questions for the final formal interview with the

teachers. This allowed the researcher to look for similarities and relationships that exist within and across the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell & Clark, 2010) to ultimately create a taxonomy (Spradley, 1980) and develop a theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Interviews with the teachers varied in length from 25-40 minutes. The researcher was already a part of the established school culture which led to an easy rapport in the interviews. Teacher participants seemed to answer questions honestly and openly.

Coding was used initially to look for common themes and included terms. The following example illustrates how a similar teacher philosophy was found across participants.

Research Question:

- What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

Structural Code: Teacher Philosophy: All Children Can Learn

### Teacher 1: Hannah Michaels

*RESEARCHER: Describe yourself as a teacher; what kind of teacher are you?*

*HM: I'd say I have high expectations for my students. And I um, I'm very academic. I think over the years. I used to be more creative, but with the way that things have gone, I feel like I hold them to really high standards with what we have to cover.*

*RESEARCHER: Right.*

*HM. And one thing that I've realized more and more this year is that when I have one of those students who isn't getting things turned in, I'm really extra tough on them. And, I have one this year in fact that has been kind of a mess for a while. I finally just said to him one day, I know that you're tired of me, but I don't give up on you, I won't give up on you.*

*RESEARCHER: Yeah, yeah.*

*HM: And he is doing so much better now.*

*RESEARCHER: Oh, good!*

*HM: That's the one thing. I won't let things go and I want them to succeed.*

*RESEARCHER: Okay. What is your philosophy of education/teaching?*

*HM: Um, just that every child can learn and that obviously everyone has a different style or pace, but that it's important to push kids to where they feel a little bit uncomfortable.*

RESEARCHER; Right

### Teacher 2: Sophia Brady

RESEARCHER: Okay, What is your philosophy of education/teaching?

SB: I guess my philosophy is all children can learn, however, how they learn and how far they advance and what they master and what they don't is all different for every single kid. I don't think; I think that sometimes our government and our school system and whatnot think that all kids can achieve at the same level.

RESEARCHER: Right

SB: And I don't believe that that's true. I believe that we should advance all children from where they are.

RESEARCHER: Right

SB: That's not always in the same place. And I also think that education changed so a lot of my philosophy now is what do you need for lifelong skills.

RESEARCHER: Right

### Teacher 3: Jenny Nelson

RESEARCHER: What is your philosophy of education/teaching?

JN: My philosophy of education is to work on helping kids or help facilitate developing the whole child. Um, my biggest thing is to assist them in developing real-life skills, to help them become lifelong learners. So in a nutshell to teach them how to learn vs. teaching them subjects.

RESEARCHER: If you had to describe the kind of teacher you are, what would you say?

JN: What kind of teacher am I? Well, I think I am a hands-on teacher. I think there are days that I'm a good teacher and days that I'm not such a good teacher. Put that in there. I'm enthusiastic, I think outgoing, um, I think classroom management if one of my strengths. I, if I don't know something, I'm a lifelong learner, so I'll do my best to learn what I don't know. I like to think that I'm inclusive, that I work to try to assist kids in developing in all areas so that they are able to feel good about themselves, even in those areas that they themselves don't excel.

RESEARCHER: Okay

JN: whether it's academic, emotional, friendships, whatever.

RESEARCHER: Okay

### Themes from Teacher Interviews

Table 14 illustrates themes from each teacher participant. Although each teacher has different qualities and background experiences, they share similar perceptions about including students with emotional impairments in their rooms

**Table 14: Themes from Teacher Interviews**

<b>Teacher 1: Mrs. Hannah Michaels</b>	<b>Teacher 2: Mrs. Sophia Brady</b>	<b>Teacher 3: Mrs. Jenny Nelson</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Every child can learn</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Small group instruction</li> <li>• Personal connection</li> <li>• Peer acceptance</li> <li>• Accommodations</li> <li>• Viewed as any other student</li> <li>• Own reactions make difference, self-reflection</li> <li>• Para support in beginning</li> <li>• Scheduling hardest part.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children can learn</li> <li>• Self-reflection</li> <li>• Working together with special ed teacher</li> <li>• Flexibility and accommodations</li> <li>• Likes challenge</li> <li>• Comfort, always knowing there's support on other side.</li> <li>• Organized</li> <li>• Coping skills</li> <li>• "just like any other kid"</li> <li>• Consistent</li> <li>• Peer acceptance</li> <li>• Schedule is hard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-child</li> <li>• Hands-on</li> <li>• Teacher as lifelong learner</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Small group</li> <li>• Mainstream helps with relationships</li> <li>• Real-world connections</li> <li>• Same as rest of students</li> <li>• Coping skills</li> <li>• Relationship huge factor</li> <li>• Accommodations</li> <li>• Communication with special ed teacher</li> <li>• Students in/out, could impact relationships</li> </ul>

**Domain Analysis from Teacher Interviews**

Once each interview was coded for initial themes/included terms, similar domains across the data could be established. The domain analyses in Tables 15, 16, and 17 show examples of how included terms and cover terms are connected with a semantic relationship (Spradley, 1980).

**Table 15: Domain Analysis: Facilitating Inclusion for Students with EI.**

<b>Included Terms</b>	<b>Semantic Relationship</b>	<b>Cover Term</b>
Making accommodations	Is a way to	Facilitate Inclusion for EI students
Differentiation		
Forming relationships		
Being consistent		

Accepting student		
-------------------	--	--

**Table 16: Domain Analysis: General Education Teachers Feeling Comfortable with Inclusion**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Communication with special education teacher	Is Needed for	General Education Teachers to Feel Comfortable with Inclusion
Support from special ed teacher		
Relationship with teacher and student(s)		

**Table 17: Domain Analysis: Accepting Students with EI into General Education**

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
All children can learn	Are beliefs held by teachers who	Accept students with emotional impairments into General Education
No different than other students		
High expectations for all		
Important to self-reflect as teacher		

### Classroom Observations

Students were observed in their mainstream classrooms (3x for 30-45 minutes). Prolonged engagement was easily established as the researcher was already a part of the school culture and had established a rapport with the student and teacher participants over the course of several years. Due to this familiarity, the researcher was able to enter the classroom and observe students and teachers in the naturalistic setting of the mainstream setting without causing disruption to the environment. Notes were taken on each detail of lesson and student/teacher action. Teachers did not know when the observer was going to observe. Lessons were not planned ahead of time for observation. Table 18 lists themes found in each classroom.



**Table 18: Themes from Classroom Observations**

<b>Teacher 1: Mrs. Michaels</b> <b>Student: Benjamin Bates</b>	<b>Teacher 2: Mrs. Brady</b> <b>Students: Summer Stine</b> <b>Amelia Duncan</b>	<b>Teacher 3: Mrs. Nelson</b> <b>Students: Shaun Jones</b> <b>Dustin Jackson</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, direct instruction</li> <li>• Teacher modeling</li> <li>• Students engaged and on-task</li> <li>• Students engaged with other students</li> <li>• Students encouraged to ask for help when needed</li> <li>• Activated prior knowledge</li> <li>• Scaffolded instruction: teacher there to support each student where needed.</li> <li>• Real-life example</li> <li>• Checks for understanding</li> <li>• Exploratory questions</li> <li>• Students in large group, kidney table, or at desks</li> <li>• Workshop Model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher modeling</li> <li>• Student participation</li> <li>• Exploratory questions</li> <li>• Teacher support during lesson</li> <li>• Supportive and encouraging</li> <li>• Students on task</li> <li>• Student movement (back table, at seats, around room)</li> <li>• Social interaction</li> <li>• Clear, direct instructions</li> <li>• A lot of student response</li> <li>• Real-life example</li> <li>• Workshop model</li> <li>• Checks for understanding</li> <li>• Scaffolded instruction: supports all kids at various levels</li> <li>• Hands-on learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respectful</li> <li>• Activate prior knowledge</li> <li>• Checks for understanding</li> <li>• Student participation</li> <li>• Student scaffolding and support</li> <li>• Students focused and engaged</li> <li>• Exploratory questions</li> <li>• Real-world connections</li> <li>• Encourages deep-thinking with questioning</li> <li>• Great classroom management</li> <li>• Activate prior knowledge</li> <li>• Hands-on learning</li> <li>• Students encouraged to ask for help</li> <li>• Workshop model</li> <li>• Student choice with work</li> <li>• Social interaction</li> </ul>

Once a similar theme was found in a data set (i.e. initial interviews), the constant comparative method was used to corroborate findings. Table 19 shows how the theme of the “importance of relationships” that was mentioned in teacher interviews was also evident in classroom observations.

**Table 19: Evidence of Student/Teacher Relationship in Classroom Observations**

<b>Teacher 1: Mrs. Michaels</b>	<b>Teacher 2: Mrs. Brady</b>	<b>Teacher 3: Mrs. Nelson</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher praised students for being ready with math materials.</li> <li>• A lot of student participation and working together</li> <li>• Invited students come to back table for extra help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of student participation in lessons.</li> <li>• Calm and supportive teacher response to incorrect answers.</li> <li>• Circulated room to work with students who needed extra help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jokes with students.</li> <li>• Prompts students to come back for extra help.</li> <li>• Students encouraged to participate, take risks.</li> </ul>

### Poetic Representation

Poetic representation is another way to analyze and interpret the data. According to Glesne (1997), “Poetic transcription creates a third voice that is neither the interviewee’s nor the researcher’s, but a combination of both” (p. 210). Using direct quotes from the interviews, poetic representation preserves the integrity of the speaker, keeping their use of speech style and syntax (Richardson, 2002).

After initial analysis of what factors contribute to student success, “relationship” emerged as a structural code. From there, lines from initial interviews were re-transcribed, grouping teacher responses together. The following is a poetic representation of the importance of creating relationships with students as a factor success:

### Poetic Representation: Student and Teacher Relationships

The relationship can help make or break anybody’s success  
 Every single one is different  
 You find the way they respond to you  
 Easy street from then on out  
 The relationship can help make or break anybody’s success

If you can connect with them  
 If you can get a relationship  
 They want to come in here  
 Just encouragement  
 Make them feel comfortable  
 They can trust me to ask for help  
 The relationship can help make or break anybody's success

Being positive with them  
 Creating that safe environment  
 They do belong  
 They trust me  
 We can work together  
 The relationship can help make  
 Or break  
 Anybody's success

Analysis of teacher interviews and teacher philosophy demonstrates that all three teachers share the belief that all students can learn. This belief seems to be a factor needed for success of including students with emotional impairments in general education. The following poetic was created using the structural code: Teacher Philosophy: All Children Can Learn:

### **Poetic Representation: All Children Can Learn**

All children can learn  
 I have high expectations  
 Everyone has a different style or pace  
 Facilitate developing the whole child  
 All children can learn

Really high standards with what we have to cover  
 Different for every single kid  
 We should advance all children from where they are  
 Help them become lifelong learners  
 All children can learn

I work to try to assist kids in developing in all areas  
 Academic, emotional, friendships  
 They can feel good about themselves  
 I won't let things go and I want them to succeed

All children can learn

I know that you're tired of me  
 But I don't give up on you  
 I won't give up on you  
 All children can learn

### **Taxonomic Analysis of Teacher Data**

After coding all data and finding similar themes and creating domain analyses across data sets, a taxonomy was created. The taxonomic analysis shown in Table 20 shows the relationship between all domains and included terms.

### **Table 20 Taxonomy: Teacher Perspective of Including Students with Emotional Impairments in General Education**

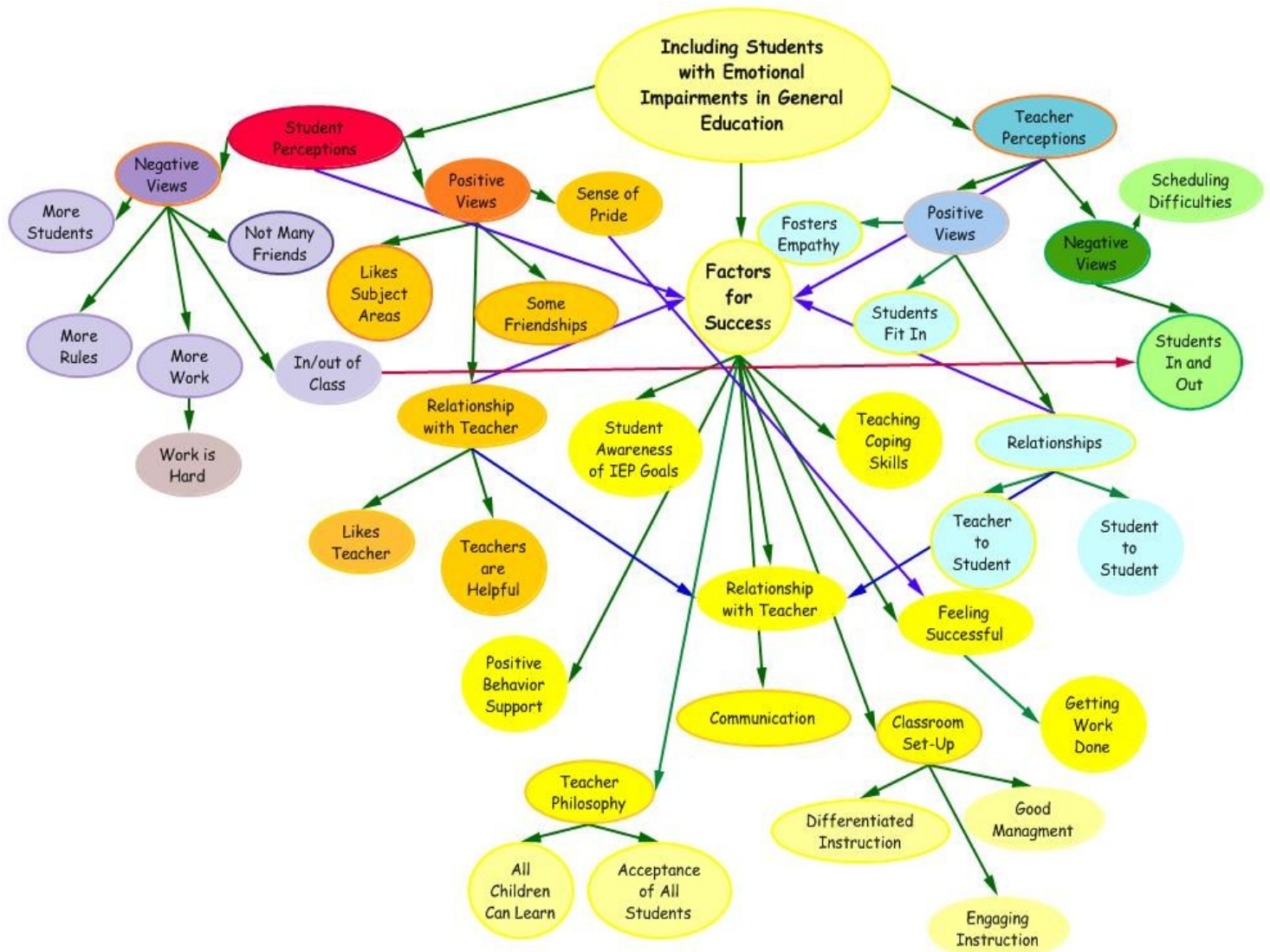
- I. Including Students with Emotional Impairments in General Education
  - A. Teacher Perspectives
    1. Positives about Mainstream
      - a. Fosters empathy and understanding with all students
      - b. Students fit in with class
      - c. Relationships
        - i. Teacher to student
        - ii. Student to student
    2. Negatives about Mainstream
      - a. Scheduling is difficult
      - b. Students in/out
        - i. Students may miss some instruction
  - B. Factors for Success
    1. Teacher Philosophy
      - a. All students can learn
      - b. Constructivist based
      - c. Acceptance of all students
      - d. Importance of relationships
      - e. Setting students up for success
      - f. Consistency
      - g. Self-reflective
    2. Communication
      - a. Mainstream Note
        - i. Important tool to communicate success

- b. Needs to feel supported by special education teacher
  - i. Frequent communication
  - ii. Adjustments made as needed
- 3. Classroom Set-Up
  - a.. Good management
    - i. Positive Behavior Support traits around room
    - ii. Reinforced with PBS tickets
    - iii. Go over PBS traits on Mainstream Note
  - b. Engaging Instruction
    - i. Connection to the real-world
    - ii. Social interaction
    - iii. Evidence of student learning around room
  - c. Differentiated Instruction
    - a. Scaffolded instruction
      - i. Student support as needed
    - b. Varied instruction to meet needs
      - i. Whole group
      - ii. Small group
      - iii. Individual instruction

### **Taxonomic Analysis of Combined Teacher and Student Data**

After taxonomies were developed from both the student and teacher data, a combined taxonomy was created to show the relationship between all included terms. This combined taxonomy depicted in Figure 8 addresses the research questions and illustrates the main components needed for successful inclusion of students with emotional impairments in general education.

**Figure 8: Taxonomy Representing Combined Findings**



### Establishing Credibility with the Findings

Credibility involves establishing that the findings of the study are truthful and credible. Peer debriefing was used to help establish credibility. A peer debriefer improves the credibility of the research and acts as both the “conscience and critic of the researcher’s work” (Barber & Walczak, 2009). The peers used to strengthen

trustworthiness of this study included a second grade general education teacher, the K-2 EI program teacher, and the EI program social worker. The peers were provided with samplings of the data and asked to describe themes they noticed across the data. All three debriefers came to the same conclusions as the researcher regarding common traits found among teacher philosophy, student perspectives, and instructional practice.

Member checks were also used to strengthen credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The informal interviews after each observation with the student participants served as a member check. Students reported what happened in mainstream and the researcher went over her observation notes with each student, confirming the classroom observations. Throughout the course of the study, teachers were sent pieces of their interview transcripts as well as parts of my data analysis. This served as a way to check my transcriptions for accuracy and to see if teacher participants were in agreement with my findings.

#### **Chapter Four: Summary**

This chapter presented a detailed analysis of the data collected during the research study. Using qualitative research analysis, all three research questions were addressed. Findings were compared within and across data sets to present a comprehensive picture of the factors needed for successful inclusion of students with emotional impairments, incorporating both student and teacher perceptions. In the next chapter, an in-depth look at the research findings based on the data analysis will be presented and explored.

## Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine what factors contribute to successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments. Through qualitative methods including observations, teacher and student interviews, collection of artifacts, and review of archival records, factors for success were explored, including characteristics of the general education classroom and teacher and student perceptions about inclusive education. The data collected supported the research questions and provided detailed information to create a framework for successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments. The data analysis was presented in the previous chapter and will further be explored in relation to the research questions in this chapter.

### Reflexivity in Research

Before presenting the data analysis, it is important to discuss the relevance of reflexivity in research. Reflexivity is the awareness of one's own influence over the data collection when the researcher is a part of the culture being studied (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). With the ethnographic design of this study, as a participant in the culture and the researcher, my unique perspective allowed me to be a "human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p. 327) in data collection and analysis.

The majority of my career has been spent teaching students with emotional impairments. My own philosophy of educating students in the least-restrictive environment, while at the same time providing them with skills necessary to succeed, has impacted my teaching and my research. My goal to have all students authentically participate in general education has shaped my own teaching practice, my interactions



with students and teachers, and ultimately, has had an impact on the data collection and analysis of this study.

Researcher bias is often frowned upon in establishing a credible study. However, qualitative research demands deep thinking and interpretation of the data collected. It is impossible to separate one's own belief systems from analysis and interpretation. As a participant in the culture being studied, I have been shaped by my experiences within that culture and all data I come in to contact with passes through my lens of experience. On one hand, being a part of the culture being studied, allowed me access and understanding to the participants that an outsider would not have obtained. However, this closeness inevitably shaped my view of the data collection and analysis and should be noted.

### **Research Questions**

Several topics were explored within each of the research questions. An abundance of data was gleaned from the formal and informal interviews about student and teacher feelings about inclusive education for students with emotional impairments and what factors lead to successful inclusion. Student data indicated feelings, fears, and a description of personal experiences in the mainstream settings. Teacher data included philosophical perspective, instructional practices, classroom set-up and a description of their personal experiences with including students with emotional impairments in their classrooms. Both teacher and student data sets provided insight into both factors for success and barriers to successful inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. The original research questions are as follows:

1. What are students with emotional impairments perceptions of being included in the general education/inclusive classroom?
2. What are teachers' views/perceptions of having students with emotional impairments in their general education classrooms?
3. What factors contribute to success of students with emotional impairments in the general education classroom?

Based on the data collected, taxonomic analyses were created to address all three questions. A combined analysis was completed incorporating the data analysis for each question. This combined analysis will be discussed in detail.

### **Factors for Successful Inclusion of Students with Emotional Impairments**

#### **Grounded Theory**

From the combined taxonomic analysis, a theory of what factors necessitate successful inclusive teaching for students with emotional impairments was developed. This theory is "grounded in the data itself" (Charmaz, 2006 p. 2). The data collected was based on the participants' views and actions, allowing for an ethnographic description of the inclusive culture observed in the school setting analyzed.

Six main components were found to necessitate successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments: (1) Communication and Collaboration, (2) Teacher Philosophy (3) Inclusive Classroom Environment, (4) Relationships, (5) Coping Skills Development, and (6) Student Self-Awareness.

**Communication and Collaboration.** As indicated in teacher interviews, communication and collaboration between the general and special educators was found to be a crucial component in successful mainstreaming.

Collaboration between special educators and general educators has been found to be a key component in student success across all levels of inclusive education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Monsen, 2004). Teachers need to feel that their voices are heard and that they are supported with inclusive education efforts (Mooji & Smeets, 2009). The importance of communication and teamwork was evident in the following teacher interview excerpts:

*RESEARCHER: What other factors do you feel contribute to EI student success?  
HM: I think communication with you and I. I mean if you were someone who was bothered by all my emails or texts, that would be hard. (laughter). I think just making sure that we're on the same page and when they know that we're communicating, I think that's really big for them to understand that it's not just an isolated visit, that it's connected.*

*RESEARCHER: What other factors do you feel contribute to EI student success?  
SB: Well, I mean I think your program is great. These kids are so lucky that they get to have the program in our district. You guys have it so you know the success is built in for them and you guys are open to "well I don't know if this is good for him or her today".*

*JN: I enjoy working with the team. I think it's an excellent team.*

All three teacher participants indicated that working together as a team is an important factor in overall success. Teacher participant Mrs. Sophia Brady eluded to the flexibility provided within the EI Program. Although the ultimate goal is always to mainstream students, if a student is noticed to be really struggling with his/her behavior on a particular day, the student may miss some of their time in mainstream to address the behavioral issue head-on and right away. Building in success for students in both the special education and general education environment requires the communication and teamwork from all involved. The team who work with students with emotional impairments (referred to in the district as the EI team) is comprised of myself as the classroom teacher, two para-educators, and a school social worker. Additionally, we

have a K-2 EI team, with another classroom teacher and two para-educators. The school social worker is shared between the two programs. The K-2 and 3-5 programs work closely together and are viewed as a K-5 continuum for students who need the services offered in the program over a number of years.

The mainstream note has a dual purpose as serving as a communication tool between teachers as well as a way for students to increase self-awareness of what behaviors they were successful with and which ones need to be worked on. This is evidenced in the following conversations:

*RESEARCHER: How do you report Shaun's achievement/needs?*

*JN: Via the daily slip (referring to mainstream note)*

*RESEARCHER: Do you find the mainstream note helpful?*

*HM: Yes. Yeah, I really like it. I think if we didn't have it, I don't think they would feel as accountable.*

As shown in the following excerpt, teachers also indicated that although the mainstream note is a communication tool between special and general education teacher, it would be more helpful if it provided more specific goals.

*RESEARCHER: Do you find the mainstream note helpful?*

*JN: Um, it's helpful in some communication, but I think with the way that I work, it would be more helpful if I had a specific goal that I knew they were working on.*

Based on teacher feedback gained from interviews, as the special education teacher in this study, I did in fact change the mainstream note for the following school year. Each mainstream note now contains the student's IEP objectives. This allows for more specific feedback and data tracking on whether students are meeting their goals across all school settings. The flexibility and changing of communication tools based on

feedback exemplifies the importance of true teamwork and collaboration for the success of students.

**Teacher Philosophy.** As past research has indicated, a teacher's belief systems about inclusive education will shape their educational practice (Jordan, Glenn, McGhie-Richmond, 2010). All three teachers who participated in this study shared common philosophies regarding including special education students into their classrooms as shown in the following conversations:

*HM: I guess just really I'm there to support them and to accommodate where I can and still make sure they are getting the instruction that everyone else is getting.*

*RESEARCHER: Do you see them as your students, like how you see your other students?*

*HM: Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely.*

*HM: I don't know that I think of them as any different than the other ones. I think just holding them accountable for things and not making it like they're just a visitor. And oh, you don't have to worry about that. I think they need to come in and know that they're just like everyone else, as far as what I'm expecting of them and obviously if they need supports or something, we put them in as it comes, but I think to make them feel that they're just like everybody else.*

*RESEARCHER: So, just to reiterate then, there's nothing you have to drastically change to fit them into your room?*

*JN: I don't think so. I think that I don't want to say that too much a deal is made, but I think that sometimes too much of a deal is made about the differences of the kids sometimes just in general. It's not that different. I don't want to say that it's a no-brainer, but it's, they aren't, having the EI kids in the classroom isn't any different than having the speech kids in the classroom, having the resource room kids in my classroom, the kids that learn better kinesthetically, the kids that learn better, it's just another....another type of difference, that isn't different than someone else who has another difference.*

All teacher participants noted that they treat the students with emotional impairments the same as the other students in their room and they believe that all children can learn. Participant Mrs. Jenny Nelson even noted that perhaps too much is made of student differences.

One of the factors within the teacher philosophy component was the ability to self-reflect on their teaching practices. This is supported in interviews in the following excerpts:

*RESEARCHER: Has there been a benefit to having students with EI in your room for you? For your students?*

*JN: Most definitely. First of all as a teacher, I'm always learning and so learning to meet to the needs of yet another type of learner or someone who has a need in an emotional area helps keep me on my toes and helps me be able to add to my tool bag, which then also helps the rest of my students because we all have emotions. And then also being able to work with the EI team, to be able to learn more about psychology of education, more about behavior techniques, those sorts of things. More about pathology and such has also helped me learn.*

*SB: With kids, I guess I'm a fairly organized, I'm always looking for new things that...like I try to evaluate myself so that if something doesn't work, I try and figure out what I could do differently.*

*SB: So, I guess I'm able to look at myself as a human and I make mistakes.*

*HM: You know, it's just that again, a constant work in progress for myself to stay really calm about things and more to have a calm consequence instead of just, yelling.*

*JN: I feel like, that you know, being able... and when they get successes, I feel excited that I was able to be a positive in their life. When they aren't being able to be successful, you know I feel frustrated with myself, like I've maybe let them down in some way or I wasn't able to find a way, same as I do with all my kids if I don't feel like I've reached them.*

The ability to look at oneself and to realize the significant impact teachers have on student success was evident across the three teacher participants. For three teachers with different training, background and experiences, it is significant that they share so much of the same teaching philosophy. All three teachers have worked with students with EI over the past four years and have readily welcomed these students into their rooms. The fact that all three are self-reflective and embrace looking critically at their own practice is an important component in successful mainstreaming. With

dissatisfaction with student behavior being the number one reason (behind salary) to leave teaching (Ingersoll, 2003), it is a testament to the teacher participants that they are open to having special education students with behavioral issues in their classrooms. This willingness could be shaped by their philosophy, past and current experiences with students, and district policy.

It is important to note that extensive planning and communication is done between the special and general education teacher before a student begins mainstreaming. This most likely leads to increased comfort for the general education teacher. Establishing and maintaining a good rapport with the mainstream teacher is one of the most important pieces of my work with students with emotional impairments. The district in which this research took place is inclusive in nature, with placement in a self-contained classroom being the last resort to pursue, after exhausting all less-restrictive options. Perhaps this practice has lent itself to a culture of acceptance for inclusive practices.

**Inclusive Classroom Environment.** The classroom environment component comprises teaching strategies as well as the classroom climate. The three teacher participants each use similar teaching methods and seem to subscribe to the constructivist theory of learning and teaching. The workshop model is used as a way to meet diverse student needs and social learning and authentic learning is emphasized, which further support the interpretive/constructivist viewpoint (Straits & Wilke, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1938). The constructivist philosophy and practice is by nature more inclusive. Teaching is fluid and dependent upon the needs of the learner.

All teachers indicated that differentiating instruction, including accommodating assignments/expectations and viewing each student as an individual was important for student success in the general education classroom. Differentiated instruction has been shown to allow for increased student access to the curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Oglan, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003) and is depicted in the following interview excerpts:

*HM: I think now that we've made some really good accommodations for him and when I cut things down, and um, he's working really well, even independently, I set the timer and things like that. I think that's the most important thing for him is just that slower pace and to be able to have some time and not feel rushed. Because as soon as he feels pressured, forget it, it's over.*

*RESEARCHER: What instructional approaches do you follow?  
JN: Um, I like to think that I do best practices, but in reality, best practices don't work for everyone and everybody. I usually do what I think they need at the time, so I usually do what I think they need at the time, so do I believe in the workshop model? Yes. I try to do math workshop, I try to do language arts, reading and writing workshop. There are times where things don't lend well to that, so it's a lot more whole group, small group and not so much strategy groups.*

*RESEARCHER: How do you meet those varying needs?*

*JN: (laughter). Like juggling plates. I'm sure there are days when I don't meet all their needs, but I think again, being a hands-on teacher, I'm basically juggling a student, or groups of students throughout the entire day, whether is science, social studies, or math...start off with a whole group lesson and then I try to pull the kids who I think need my support and then kids who feel that they need my support will come to me and then kids who don't come to me and don't think they need my support that I know need my support, I will check in on, and if they're doing fine then I have them work on their own and if not, then I have them work with me. Then we do you know partner activities.*

*RESEARCHER: Right.*

*JN: And I also try to relate what we're doing in our classroom with why it's important for them to learn this now for the real world.*

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about the academic and social performance of students with EI in your room.*

*JN: The academic varies. It's like all the other kids in my class. I mean they have strengths and things that they need support with. Um, I think sometimes the biggest difficulty with them with their emotions is staying on task to get it done, because they have I think more anxiety or more negative maybe about schoolwork or things like that. So again, that's another thing to try to get them to feel positive about that.*



*RESEARCHER: Do you have to change your instructional practice at all to accommodate EI students, more so than other students?*

*HM: Um, no, not instructionally. The workshop model allows for the different levels and you can put them where they're at. And I find that most of the time, the EI kids are not my lower ones anyway.*

*RESEARCHER: Right.*

*HM: You know, they're capable, so.. Sometimes I accommodate by going down a little bit if they have an issue with pace.*

*RESEARCHER: Do you have to devote more time with EI students than with other special education students?*

*SB: I don't feel like I have to take away from other students to give to them.*

I chose to specially ask about the time teachers have to give to the students with EI compared to other students in their rooms. There is often the notion that including special education students takes away from the other students in the room. The teacher participants' responses correspond with research on this topic (Staub & Peck, 1995; Peltier, 1997; Idol, 2006). Accommodations are made for all students in the inclusive classroom environment, so when a student with emotional impairments is need of differentiation, it is not viewed as cumbersome, but a natural piece of the instructional practice.

**Relationships.** Student and teacher relationships were found to be another important factor for success. All teachers mentioned this and it was evident in classroom observations and interviews as shown below:

*HM: if you can get a relationship. A lot of times, I think they want to come in here*

*RESEARCHER: Okay. What are your successes with your students with EI? How do you gauge success?*

*JN: (laughter). I think for me personally, I gauge success if I can see that I am challenging them, particularly in the social emotional realm and they're responding with a coping skill or responding well to it. I also think if I feel that if I have a relationship with them, that's a big thing. Um, if they can come to me and they can trust me to ask for help or they can trust me to whatever, they can trust me to share stories about what they did over the weekend, things like that, then I*

*know I have a relationship, and that's being successful. I think the relationship can help make or break anybody's success.*

*RESEARCHER: Do the students fit in with the other students in your room?*

*HM: Yeah, yeah, they do. I think I worried more long ago. You know gosh, are they going to feel uncomfortable when they come in and how will the other kids treat them and I think since these kids have been in our building in our building all along, it's not a new thing. I think you do a good job of when you come in in the beginning of the year about why they're in here and why they're in your room. Um, I just, I don't know, I think the kids like having them in here, I do.*

*RESEARCHER: Are there any factors in your classroom that you feel contribute to their success? Set up or environment?*

*JN: I think being unconditionally accepting of them. Where they um, and building a relationship. I think a relationship is the most important part. They have to feel that like any kid, that you're interested in them, that you like them, and I think that, kudos to you and the hard work you do to try and get them to have the desk and those types of things. Not that I wouldn't do that for them, but I think that all that goes into a sense of community, including them in everything so that the el kids know that you do care about them, that they're not an extra. Because I'm sure for them that transitioning to another classroom, especially when they don't know the teacher, has to be completely terrifying.*

*RESEARCHER: What do you find is important for EI student success in your room?*

*SB: Just encouragement, I think you know, try to give them positives that they can do it. I think you have to have a balance of the stern and also I try to give them fist-pumps and say hello when they come in and kind of talk to them. But I think just being consistent and positive.*

*JN: Classroom environment is everything to me. That's like my number one priority. I think the atmosphere, the climate itself, is like the umbrella for everything else that goes under it. It becomes like a family, where over time you know whose strengths are what, who needs help with what, and so it becomes pretty much where everyone helps each other or knows what's going to kind of push peoples' buttons, and we refrain from that. I like to catch students being successful.*

All three teacher participants believe in the value of creating relationships with their students. Creating a sense of belonging for students aides in long-term school success (Reschly & Christenson, 2006). Having a trusting relationship between teacher and student creates a level of comfort for student, allowing them to take more risks with

their learning (Witmer, 2005). Students with emotional impairments already struggle with interpersonal relationships, and having a teacher take a genuine interest in them can serve as a positive model of relationships for students (Visser, 2005).

**Coping Skills Development.** Students are explicitly taught coping skills in the special education classroom. Use of coping skills is included in every student's IEP and a necessary component for successful integration into the general education settings (Quinn, Kavale, Mathur, Rutherford, & Forness, 1999). Social skills teaching encompasses skills for social interactions, behavior for learning, and coping skills to handle frustration (Patterson, Jolivette, & Crosby, 2006). Coping skills taught in the EI program focus on specific strategies that students can learn to help them handle frustration or other strong feelings in the moment.

Additionally, the school environment has had a Positive Behavior Support system in place for several years. This school-wide systems-based approach focuses on supporting appropriate student behavior. The positive behavior traits focused on at the school where the research took place are: responsible, reliable, ready, resilient, and respectful (The 5 R's). Focusing on the PBS traits taught is another way to reinforce skills for success in the classroom while creating a safe and secure environment for students (Fogt & Piripavel, 2002). Lessons are taught school-wide and reinforced in classrooms across the environments to model, teach, and re-teach behavioral expectations. As shown in previous data and in the following excerpts, coping skills and the PBS traits are important factors in creating and sustaining an inclusive environment:

*HM: Well, we have behavioral expectations. I think really, you know as the whole building PBS program, that really flows into here, I mean, all the rooms do that. Just you know, reiterating the 5 R's and how it important it is to be respectful to everybody. Um, I don't allow anybody to sit there and bother people at their table.*

*JN: So I think knowing the coping skills. The biggest issue has been the work production and the work pressures and having them have the different coping skills help. I guess there's been a couple who can hold it together a little more. So I guess that's my learning piece, how can I help them carry it over.*

The student mainstream note is based on the PBS expectations and those expectations, along with coping skills were mentioned repeatedly by students in formal and informal interviews as ways to gauge their success at school. In an effort to support the PBS program at the research site and further support all students (not just those identified as students with EI), the staff was trained by this researcher and the rest of the EI team in how to use teach coping skills and integrate them across the curriculum. Having all staff members familiar with the coping skills taught in the EI setting was a way to establish a connection between special education and general education staff while supporting students building-wide. Table 22 shows an excerpt from a handout given the staff at the research site showing them how the PBS traits are aligned with coping skills.

**Table 21: PBS Traits and Coping Skills**

<b>Respectful</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Ready</b>	<b>Reliable</b>	<b>Resilient</b>
*Use calm words	*Give an I-Message	*Take a deep breath	*Give an I-message	*Move or walk away
*Take a break/rest/ walk	*Ignore	*Use calm words	*Get adult help	*Ignore
*Punch a pillow	*Get adult help	*Positive self-talk	*Figure out what made me upset	*Positive self-talk
*Stop and think	*Take a break	*Figure out what made me upset	*Stop and Think	*Bump it out
*Accept imperfection	*Talk to a Friend	*Count in your head	*Deal with your feelings	*Count in your head
*Be kind to yourself	*Punch a pillow	*Write in a journal	*Discover your choices	*Take a break/rest/ walk
*Take responsibility	*Stop and think	*Stop and Think	*Accept imperfection	*Listen to music
*Accept consequences	*Deal with your feelings	*Adjust your attitude	*Be kind to	*Exercise
*Be honest	*Discover your choices			*Laugh it out
	*Take 1 step at a time			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Be kind to yourself</li> <li>*Move on</li> <li>*Take responsibility</li> <li>*Accept consequence</li> <li>*Be honest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Discover your choices</li> <li>*Take 1 step at a time</li> <li>*Visualization</li> <li>*Be honest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yourself</li> <li>*Keep the problem small</li> <li>*Take responsibility</li> <li>*Accept consequence</li> <li>*Be honest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Punch a pillow</li> <li>*Draw it out</li> <li>*Hug a stuffed animal</li> <li>*Adjust your attitude</li> <li>*Deal with your feelings</li> <li>*Keep the problem small</li> <li>*Move on</li> <li>*Take responsibility</li> </ul>
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The school site where the research took place has existing supports and belief systems in place that lend it to successful inclusive practice for students with emotional impairments. The staff has received in-services on school-wide Positive Behavior Support and coping skills. Increasing achievement using social skills instruction as a strategy is also a part of the school improvement plan. The focus of coping skills development for students is to teach for transfer. Through structured lessons on coping skills in addition to less-formal interventions with students going through a frustrating time (i.e. problem-solving and prompting to use coping skills), the goal is to have students internalize the coping skills, making them accessible across all environments.

**Student Self-Awareness.** As indicated by student interviews, students are keenly aware of what their IEP goals are and what skills they need for success. Students were able to reference their goals easily. Table 21 depicts one of each student's IEP objectives and their awareness.

**Table 22: Student Awareness of IEP Goals**

Student	IEP Short-Term Objective	Prompt	Evidence of Self-Awareness
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Shaun	Shaun will utilize an appropriate coping skill to persevere when frustrated academically or socially within 15 minutes of initial upset.	“Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?”	“I was ignoring people that were bothering me.”
Summer	Summer will identify positive thoughts and ideas for a given situation.	“Show me your mainstream note and explain it”	Pointed to teacher comment (“Better with notes today”). “It feels good.”
Dustin	Dustin will identify and/or model 1-2 positive ways to gain attention from peers.	“Show me your mainstream note and explain it.”	“All yesses. I was good. I had friendly behavior.”
Amelia	Amelia will use coping skills in order to participate academically and socially.	“Show me your mainstream note and explain it.”	“All yesses. It means I participated.”
Benjamin	Ben will identify and use a coping skill with a prompt when academically frustrated.	“Were you successful academically? Were you successful behaviorally?”	“I took a few deep breaths and did my work.” “I didn’t cry or get upset or throw a fit.”

Students in the EI program are active participants in their education. They are reminded daily about their IEP goals and they visually see them on their “Positive Behavior Teaching” note that goes home to parents daily. Students rate themselves on how they did on the five PBS traits (with a smiley face, okay, or sad face), and then as their teacher, I also rate them. Students are called up each day before leaving to discuss their day and their IEP goals. The IEP goals/objectives are also on the daily note. I will often ask students if they thought they met their goal for the day and we together mark either yes or no for each objective. Teachers are often prompted to share with students about academic objectives for the day. This focuses the instruction for both the teacher and student. The same seems to be true regarding sharing behavioral

goals with students. The increase in self-awareness allows for open and honest discussions about behavior and coping skills between staff and students.

### **Barriers to Successful Inclusion**

Throughout the interviews, students and teachers were encouraged to be honest about any challenges or barriers to successful inclusion. The data analysis showed that there is sometimes a disconnect for students who are going between a general and special education classroom. The curricular content and pace was also noted to be a challenge for both students and teachers.

**Partial Participation in General Education.** Both teachers and students indicated that the back and forth inherent in the mainstreaming process was a barrier to successful inclusion. This is indicated in the interview excerpts below:

*HM: I think the one thing that's a little bit of a challenge is just the coming and going. And when they're getting pulled out for PE. The schedule just can't be any other way, but they're missing part of lessons, and just knowing how much to make them accountable. But I think we've done a good job with modifying things, especially in the case of Ben.*

*RESEARCHER: What challenges do you find having EI students in your room?  
JN: I think one would be in some of the cases, there's not as close of a home-school contact with me as the teacher. And I think sometimes holding them more accountable because they're not always there when I do the planner and if I've forgotten something, I don't want to hold them accountable for having to do that and the communication piece that way. And the only other thing is having to stick to a schedule because I don't want them...I feel that when I change the schedule, I uproot them and I also uproot your schedule, so..*

*JN: I think because we have places for them that are vacant when they are not here, to some degree they don't see them as being completely inclusive. They see them as different. They don't treat them differently, but I think there's a little bit of a disconnect that way.*

*RESEARCHER: What challenges do you find having EI students in your room?  
SB: Scheduling is the hardest. Trying to keep to an exact schedule is extremely difficult with the curriculum.*

This frustration of coming and going was echoed in a student response in the interviews:

*RESEARCHER: How do you feel about going to mainstream?*

*SS: Kind of annoying. In/out, in/out, in/out.*

With the elementary school set up, it is hard to avoid going in and out of each classroom throughout the day. As JN noted, the students with EI who are not there all day may be seen as not a full participant in the general education setting. Some of the student participants noted that while they felt a strong connection and relationship with their teacher, they did not generally feel they had a lot of friendships in the general education classroom. Going in and out could lead to them feeling like a visitor instead of a citizen in the mainstream environment.

**Curriculum/Workload.** With state and federal policy focusing heavily on student academic achievement, the curriculum and work being a barrier to inclusion did not come as a surprise. Thoughts on the curriculum and its impact on students is included below:

*JN: Well, I think the hardest thing I see most of them struggle with is workload, homework, or even the challenges of work. I think that knowing that there's different coping skills and knowing that there's ways to be able to chunk assignments, and work. I think when they know that as the teacher I know that I can do some of those things, I think it relieves some of that pressure. So knowing the coping skills that I can help them use, I think...wait, what was the question?*

*SB: Sometimes I wonder about our curriculum. It's hard enough for kids who come to school on a happy basis, to handle the amount of curriculum. So, I could see if you were an EI kid, how that could be something that could set them back.*

Students SJ and BB expressed that work is hard and is only preferred when it is easy:

*RESEARCHER: Tell me again about your general education class.*



*SJ: My mainstream class is Mrs. Nelson. It's kind of hard in there because she pressures you a lot and she makes you do a lot of work.*

*RESEARCHER: Tell me about the work in mainstream.*

*BB: Well, I only like the work if it's easy stuff.*

The teacher philosophy and practice align with supporting all learners, including those with unique needs. Even with scaffolded and differentiated instruction, mainstream work is viewed as harder than work in the special education classroom. This could lead to students avoiding mainstream or acting out in order to come back to the special education environment. This again, is where communication between special and general education teachers is paramount to student success. It is important that students work within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), where they are able to access appropriately challenging work with the scaffolding provided by the teacher. If students feel too challenged, they may shut-down, causing the learning to stop. It takes a relationship between student and teacher and in the case of inclusive teaching, the relationship between special and general educator to accurately assess a student's instructional level and threshold.

### **Summary**

This research study provided a window into inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. Through qualitative methods, an authentic inclusive culture was examined. Teachers and students were interviewed and observed within the natural setting of the school environment. Six main components were found to necessitate successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments: (1) Communication and Collaboration, (2) Teacher Philosophy, (3) Inclusive Classroom Environment, (4) Relationships, (5) Coping Skills Development, and (6) Student Self-Awareness.

Barriers to inclusion were found to be the curriculum/workload and partial access to general education.

### **Lingering Questions**

Throughout this study, I have come to understand what components are necessary for successful inclusion. Although I had some pre-existing ideas about these factors based on past experience, letting the data speak for itself was an eye-opening experience. To see the same wording and themes present themselves across participants and across data sets gave me a complete picture of what is going well with inclusion for my students and what needs further exploration.

I am left wondering how special education services can realistically be provided with keeping students in general education as much as possible. Going back and forth between special and general education settings is not ideal for student learning or social relationships. However, the current service delivery model with one special educator in a building of many general educators (with students spread over many classrooms) does not make pushing-in feasible and could compromise the specific coping skills teaching and discussion that occurs in the special education setting.

I am also wondering about the appropriateness of the curriculum schools are now forced to cover. Pacing guides, more testing, and sanctions for not showing growth have changed the landscape of our educational system. There is less time for social interaction in the classrooms and much more content to cover. In order to cover the expected curriculum, recesses have been shortened and school days have been lengthened. Would my students and special education students in general fare better if the curriculum were more geared towards student developmental levels instead of

state-mandated standards? If teachers were allowed the true freedom to teach without worrying about passing state assessments, would there be less behavioral problems in classrooms today? Time will tell how or if high-stakes testing impacts inclusive education for all special education students, including those with emotional impairments.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study provide some suggestions for future research. Future research would strengthen trustworthiness of this data. There are limited studies exploring elementary inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. It would be worthwhile to apply the same methodology to similar educational settings and then compare the results.

Additionally, implementing this framework for successful inclusive practices in a school that has previously not participated in inclusion would increase transferability of this research. Although transferability is not typical with naturalistic data collection, the rich description of data and the setting could provide the resources needed to first create a school culture receptive to inclusive teaching and then to replicate this study.

As the researcher and special education teacher involved with the participants, my views were not overtly captured. Future research should include interviews and observations of the special education teacher and classroom as well. This would enhance the data and fill in that missing piece that is needed to create an inclusive culture.

## Conclusion

This study used an ethnographic, qualitative design with a case-study format to explore the components of a culture that allows for successful inclusive teaching for students with emotional impairments. Interviews, observations, review of records, collection of artifacts, and field notes were techniques used in this study. Triangulation of data was obtained by using multiple modes of data collection from a variety of participants.

This study suggests that although past research shows that students with emotional impairments are the most excluded population from general education, this inequity can be changed. The inclusive culture at the research site was studied, providing a theory of the factors needed for successful inclusive practices. Six main factors were found across data sets to be necessary for successful inclusion to occur: (1) Communication and Collaboration, (2) Relationships, (3) Classroom Environment, (4) Teaching Philosophy, (5) Coping Skills Development, and (6). Student Self-Awareness. A commitment to creating and sustaining these components could lead to increased access to general education for students with emotional impairments and thus, a greater opportunity for long-term success.

## APPENDIX A

### Parental Permission/Research Informed Consent

Title of Study: Inclusive Education for Students with Emotional impairments: Factors for Success

#### Purpose:

You are being asked to allow your child to be in a research study at their school that is being conducted by Jessica Momeni, graduate student, from Wayne State University to examine factors for successful inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. Your child has been selected because he/she receives special education services in a classroom for student with emotional impairments and also attends general education classes for part of the school day.

#### Study Procedures:

If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, your child will be observed will be asked to describe their experiences in the general education classroom.

- Participants will attend their scheduled time in their general education classroom. Students participating in the study will be observed in their general education classroom on three occasions.
- Students will be interviewed for this study. The questions will focus on student experiences and opinions about time spent in general education. Your child has the option to only answer questions they want to answer. You are free to withdraw your child from this study at any time.
- This study will take place over a four month time span. During this time, your child will be observed in the general education setting three times for sessions lasting from 30-35 minutes. Observations will focus on the classroom environment, student to student, and student to teacher interactions.
- Copies of the interview questions are with Jessica Momeni and are available for parent review upon request.

#### Benefits:

- There may be no direct benefits for your child; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

#### Risks:

- There are no known risks at this time to your child for participation in this study.

The following information must be released/reported to the appropriate authorities if at any time during the study there is concern that:

- child abuse or elder abuse has possibly occurred,

#### Costs

There are no costs to you or your child to participate in this study.

#### Compensation:

- You or your child will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

All information collected about your child during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

- Your child will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies your child personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], Office of Civil Rights [OCR], etc.), may review your child's records.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child at any time. Your decision about enrolling your child in the study will not change any present or future relationships with Wayne State University or its affiliates, your child's school, your child's teacher, your child's grades or other services you or your child are entitled to receive.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Jessica Momeni or one of her research team members at the following phone number 248-956-4024. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study:**

To voluntarily agree to have your child take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to have your child take part in this study, you may withdraw them at any time. You are not giving up any of your or your child's legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print the Name of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/ Legally Authorized Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent Authorized Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*Signature of Parent/ Legally Authorized Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent Authorized Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Name of **Person Obtaining** Oral Assent (children age 7-12)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

**APPENDIX B**  
**Oral Assent Form**  
 (ages 7-12)

Title: Inclusive Education for Students with Emotional impairments: Factors for Success

**Study Investigator: Jessica Momeni**

**Why am I here?**

This is a research study. Only people who choose to take part are included in research studies. You are being asked to take part in this study because you spend time in a special education and general education classroom. Please take time to make your decision. Talk to your family about it and be sure to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

**Why are they doing this study?**

This study is being done to find out what helps you do well in general education.

**What will happen to me?**

You will be observed in your general education classroom. I will ask you some questions to make sure I understand what happened.

**How long will I be in the study?**

You will be in the study for 3 months. You will be observed 3 times in general education for 20-45 minutes each time.

**Will the study help me?**

You will not benefit from being in this study; however information from this study may help other teachers and students in the future.

**Will anything bad happen to me?**

This study will not hurt you in any way. I will not single you out during my classroom observations.

**Do my parents or guardians know about this? (If applicable)**

This study information has been given to your parents/guardian. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

**What about confidentiality?**

I will keep everything private. No information gathered will be shared using your name.



**What if I have any questions?**

For questions about the study please call Jessica Momeni at 248-956-4024. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628.

**Do I have to be in the study?**

You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to or you can stop being in the study at any time. Please discuss your decision with your parents and researcher. No one will be angry if you decide to stop being in the study.

## APPENDIX C

### Behavioral Research Informed Consent

Title of Study: Inclusive Education for Students with Emotional impairments: Factors for Success

Principal Investigator (PI): Jessica Momeni  
Special Educator  
248-956-4024

#### Purpose

You are being asked to be in a research study of factors for successful inclusion of students with emotional impairments because you are a general education teacher who has special education students with emotional/behavioral disorders in your room for part of the school day. This study is being conducted at Wayne State University and Loon Lake Elementary. The estimated number of study participants to be enrolled at Wayne State University/Loon Lake is about 5. **Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.**

In this research study, factors that contribute to successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments will be explored through direct observations and teacher and student interviews.

#### Study Procedures

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to allow me to observe special education study participants in your classroom and participate in two interviews with me about your experiences and opinions about inclusive education. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and then erased.

1. You will be interviewed at the start and end of this study. You will be asked questions about your classroom and about your experiences with mainstreaming. You have the option of not answering any question.
2. Special education students in your classroom will be observed on three occasions. Each observation will last from 30-45 minutes. I will be observing the classroom environment, student to student interaction, and teacher to student interaction.
3. Your identity will remain confidential. You will be given a code name in observational notes and interview transcriptions.

#### Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

#### Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

### **Study Costs**

- Participation in this study will be of no cost to you.

### **Compensation**

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

### **Confidentiality**

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University, or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight [e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), etc.] may review your records.

When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

If audiotape recordings of you will be used for research or educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. All audio-taped interviews will be destroyed immediately after transcription. Your name will not be used and will be replaced by a code name. You will be able to review the transcript from your interview upon request.

### **Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decisions will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

The PI may stop your participation in this study without your consent. The PI will make the decision and let you know if it is not possible for you to continue. The decision that is made is to protect your health and safety, or because you did not follow the instructions to take part in the study

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Jessica Momeni or one of her research team members at the following phone number 248-956-4024. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

### Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

## APPENDIX D

### Principal Letter of Support



Anita R. Qonja, Principal

**Walled Lake Consolidated Schools**

**Loon Lake Elementary**

2151 Loon Lake Road, Wixom, MI 48393  
248.956.4000

September 19, 2012

To Whom It May Concern at Wayne State University,

I understand that Jessica Momeni, a Ph.D. candidate and teacher in Walled Lake Consolidated Schools at Loon Lake Elementary, is completing her dissertation research titled: Inclusive Education for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders: Factors for Success. The Walled Lake Consolidated School District grants permission for Jessica Momeni to interview students, teachers, and observe in classrooms at Loon Lake Elementary. I understand that all protocols regarding consent will be followed and that student confidentiality will be respected. I view the research design as ethical and fully support Jessica's research efforts.

Sincerely,

*Anita R. Qonja*

Anita R. Qonja

## APPENDIX E

### School District Letter of Support



Kenneth Gutman  
Superintendent of Schools

### Walled Lake Consolidated Schools

Educational Services Center  
850 Ladd Road, Building D  
Walled Lake, MI 48390  
Phone: 248/956-2000  
Fax: 248/956-2124

September 19, 2012

To Whom It May Concern at Wayne State University,

I understand that Jessica Momeni, a Ph.D. candidate and teacher in our district, is completing her dissertation research titled: Inclusive Education for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders: Factors for Success. The Walled Lake Consolidated School District grants permission for Jessica Momeni to interview students and teachers, and to observe in classrooms at Loon Lake Elementary School. I understand that all protocols regarding consent will be followed. I view the research design as ethical and fully support Jessica's research efforts, and I know this outstanding educator will be equally successfully in her research.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kenneth Gutman'.

Kenneth Gutman  
Superintendent of Schools

## APPENDIX F

### Student Initial Formal Interview Protocol

Segue: I would like to talk to you about school.

1. Tell me about yourself and what it's like to be a student.
2. Describe a day at school.
3. What are your favorite subjects?
4. What are your least favorite subjects?
5. Tell me about your friends. Who are your friends? What do you like to do together?

Segue: You are in 2 classrooms, one special education classroom and one general education classroom.

6. Tell me about your general education class.
7. Tell me about your special education class.
8. What is the same about learning in Ms. Momeni's class and learning in your general education class?
9. What is different about learning in Ms. Momeni's class and learning in your general education class?
10. Are there things you like about your general education classroom?
11. Are there things you like about your special education classroom?
12. If you could change anything about school, what would it be?
13. How/in what ways do your teachers help you?
14. What helps you the best/most at school?

Segue: Let's talk specifically about general education.

15. Tell me about your general education classroom and teacher.
16. Tell me about the classroom routines in general education.
17. When did you first start going to general education?
18. How did you first feel about attending general education?
19. What subjects do you now attend in general education?
20. Have your feelings changed at all about general education?
21. Tell me what being successful in general education means to you.
22. Are you successful in general education?
23. Why or why not?
24. How do you know when you are successful?
25. Tell me about a successful day at school. What happens when you are having a good/successful day?

## APPENDIX G

### Teacher Initial Formal Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself as a teacher.
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What is your philosophy of education/teaching?
4. If you had to describe the kind of teacher you are, what would you say?
5. What is your current teaching assignment?
6. What instructional approaches do you follow?
7. Tell me about your formal education in teaching?

Segue: I'd now like to talk about your experiences with special education students in your classroom.

8. Tell me about the students in your classroom.
9. Do your students have varying needs?
10. How do you meet those needs?
11. Tell me about your experiences with students with emotional impairments.
12. What were your feelings/concerns when you first began teaching students who were emotionally impaired?
13. Have your feelings changed at all?

Segue: Let's talk about your classroom as an inclusive environment. I've noticed several EI students experiencing success in your classroom and would like to find out more.

14. Describe your classroom environment.
15. What have you noticed about students with EI in your room?
16. What are (name of student) needs as you see them?
17. Tell me about the academic and social performance of students with EI in your room.
18. How do you see your role with students with EI in your room?
19. What are your successes with your students with EI? How do you gauge success?
20. What have you noticed that makes a positive impact on EI student success?
21. Have you done anything special to accommodate students with EI in your class? (i.e. Organization, program adaptation, materials, teaching techniques).
22. How do you report (name of student)'s achievement/needs?
23. Does (name of EI student) frequently interact with all students?
24. Is there anything else that might help me understand how mainstreaming works in your classroom?
25. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?



**APPENDIX H**  
**Mainstream Note**

Daily Mainstreaming Note

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Language Arts		Math		Science		Social Studies		Other		FAPES	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
<b>Expectation</b>												
Respectful												
Responsible												
Resilient												
Ready												
Reliable												

Comments/Homework:

## APPENDIX I

### Student Informal Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about what just happened in general education.
2. What subject did you attend?
3. Were you successful academically? How do you know?
4. Were you successful behaviorally? How do you know?
5. Show me your mainstream note. Can you explain it to me?

## APPENDIX J

### Student Final Formal Interview Protocol

I'd like to talk to you more about mainstream.

1. Tell me again about your general education class.
2. How do you feel about going to mainstream?
3. How do you feel once in the classroom?
4. What do you do when you go to mainstream and the teacher has already started with the lesson?
5. Do you feel included in mainstream?
6. Tell me about your friends in mainstream.
7. Do you talk to the students in your gen ed class?
8. Tell me about the work in mainstream.
9. Who helps you with your work?
10. Are there things that you like about your gen ed class?
11. What helps you have good days in mainstream?
12. Is there anything your mainstream teacher does to help you?
13. When you are in mainstream and you start to feel frustrated, what happens?
14. Tell me about the teaching in mainstream. Whole group? Small group?
15. What happens when you need help with work in mainstream?
16. How is it having 2 teachers at school?
17. Do you follow the same classroom rules as the students in gen ed?
18. Tell me about your mainstream note. Do you think it helps you?
19. Do you ever need to use coping skills in mainstream? Does it help?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about mainstream?

## APPENDIX K

### Teacher Final Interviews

I wanted to talk to you a little more about including students with EI in your classrooms.

1. Do you have to change your instructional practice at all to accommodate EI students, more so than other students?
2. Do you have to devote more time with EI students than with other special ed students?
3. What happens when/if a student starts to have an issue in your room?
4. Have the EI students ever caused a disruption in your room? Does it take away from instruction?
5. Has there been a benefit to having students with EI in your room for you? For your students?
6. What challenges do you find having EI students in your room?
7. Do you find the mainstream note helpful?
8. What do you find is important for EI student success in your room?
9. Do the students fit in with the other students in your room?
10. Do you feel comfortable having students with EI in your room?
11. What other factors do you feel contribute to EI student success?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?

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**ABSTRACT****INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS:  
FACTORS FOR SUCCESS**

by

**JESSICA COHEN****May 2014****Advisor:** Dr. Gerald R. Oglan**Major:** Special Education**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

Special education policy and practice are ever evolving to best meet the needs of all students in an inclusive environment. Since the implementation the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) thirty years ago, students with special needs have moved from restrictive, exclusionary placements to being educated alongside their same aged non-disabled peers. As we have moved towards viewing special education as a service, not a place, including more students with disabilities in the general education setting and curriculum has become the expected practice in the majority of public schools in the United States. Despite this progress, students with emotional impairments remain the most excluded population from inclusive education and continue to have higher dropout and expulsion rates.

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to identify and examine what factors contribute to successful inclusion for students with emotional impairments. Through qualitative methods including classroom observations, review of records, artifact collection, and teacher and student interviews, characteristics of successful inclusion were examined. Teacher perceptions about including students with emotional



impairments in their classrooms were explored as well as special education students' attitudes and beliefs about being included in the general education setting.

This study suggests that although past research shows that students with emotional impairments are the most excluded population from general education, this inequity can be changed. The inclusive culture at the research site was studied, providing a theory of the factors needed for successful inclusive practices. Six main factors were found across data sets to be necessary for successful inclusion to occur: (1) Communication and Collaboration, (2) Relationships, (3) Inclusive Classroom Environment, (4) Teaching Philosophy, (5) Coping Skills Development, and (5) Student Self-Awareness. A commitment to creating and sustaining these components can lead to increased access to general education for students with emotional impairments.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Jessica Cohen received her B.S. in Special Education and Psychology from Eastern Michigan University in 2002. She holds teaching certifications in elementary education, language arts (grades 6-8), emotional impairments and learning disabilities (K-12). She received her M.A. in Educational Leadership with a K-12 administration certification in 2006 from Eastern Michigan University. At Wayne State University in pursuit of her Ph.D., she has majored in Special Education with a cognate in Educational Leadership.

Mrs. Cohen has started two elementary programs for students with emotional impairments, first in San Jose, California, and then in Eastpointe, Michigan. She has also taught in the resource room, where she became certified in Reading Recovery. Currently, Mrs. Cohen is teaching in an upper elementary classroom for students with emotional impairments in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District. In this position, she collaborates with several general education teachers to educate her students in the least-restrictive environment. Mrs. Cohen also provides behavioral consultation for struggling students in the district.

Mrs. Cohen has presented to her school districts on inclusive education for students with emotional impairments. She currently co-leads a parent support group for parents who have students with emotional impairments and co-chairs the Positive Behavior Support Committee at her school. She has co-led several staff and parent in-services on Positive Behavior Support techniques. Jessica Cohen has served as Associate Editor for the International Journal of Whole Schooling and as part of an internship, has co-taught a course on inclusive education at Wayne State University.