The Roles and Responsibilities of Special Education Teachers

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The purpose of this study was to describe the roles and responsibilities of 17 special education teachers and the challenges they encountered in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress of elementary students in 4 school districts in Western Pennsylvania. This study was conducted by collecting data through focus group discussions, written weekly logs, and personal interviews. Focus group questions regarding the teaching practices of special educators were guided by the review of the literature and the conceptual framework of this study, based in part on Duke's 1987 vision of teaching excellence in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring student progress.

Findings revealed five challenges and impacts of the challenges they encountered in their daily work, together explaining the role dissonance experienced by many special education teachers in today's schools. Real life examples of how teachers cope with the challenges of their daily work were revealed through the stories they told in this study. The collective knowledge and experiences of these teachers stand as examples for others in their own practices.

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PREFACE

This journey began with the desire to learn everything and understand most of it. I went to the University of Pittsburgh seeking faculty in the Special Education program who could lead me on my journey. Drs. Zigmond, Lyon, Bean, Trovato and Penn taught me how to ask the questions and where to find the answers. Their enthusiasm and commitment and fine examples of professionalism were contagious. I thank them one and all.

So often during this time I leaned on the support of my office partner and friend Amanda Kloo. For all the nights we spent studying, especially all the statistics, I am forever grateful for our journey past and anticipate sharing many new roads with you. A special thanks to Tommy Bost, who will forever be known as the Statistics Savior. I enjoyed every minute of being with both of you.

Taking on a commitment like a Doctorate degree is a serious responsibility and even more difficult when raising children at the same time. For all of the countless hours I spent with my back to my children and my face towards the computer screen, I thank Nick and Alexis Katsafanas. For all of the vacation time I spent with my laptop and not in the swimming pool, I thank you for your patience and pride and belief in me. I hope I have instilled in you, through my example, the belief that education is the key to opening the world and a journey taken that is

never regretted. I look forward to supporting both of you as you begin your own journeys and follow your own dreams.

I am grateful to Pete, my Dad and my sisters, to Sally and my friends who understood why I didn't call for weeks on end and who stayed by me when I ignored them the most. I never felt anything but complete understanding and love from all of you, and that support sustained me throughout this journey. You all deserve honorary Doctorate degrees.

For all my friends at the Stillpoint Zendo who supported me through our shared practice of zazen, many bows.

A special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Naomi Zigmond, for her amazing work in our field and for her example of what a strong and successful woman can do to change the world for students with disabilities.

1   INTRODUCTION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 required not only that beneficial

curricula be made accessible to students with disabilities but that schools monitor student

learning outcomes and include test scores in state accountability and assessment systems. This

mandate was reinforced when President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of

2002, and, subsequently, IDEA 2004. These legislative initiatives have influenced the inclusion

of many more students with disabilities in the general education environment and in statewide

assessments in grades three through eight. Students with disabilities are expected to meet the

same standards as their peers without disabilities, and special educators are playing a much

larger role than ever before in the direct education of this population of students with disabilities

in the general education environment.

According to the 24th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), during the 2000-2001

school year, 2,879,445 students between the ages of 6-21 were identified as having specific

learning disabilities (LD), and 48% of those students received the majority of their instruction

during the school day in general education classrooms (<21% outside of general education). The

26th Annual Report to Congress (2005) found that during the 2003-2004 school year almost half

of students with disabilities spent 80% or more of the day in general education classrooms.

Learning disabilities continue to comprise the most prevalent disability among students age 6-21

(51%) according to the U.S. Department of Education, 2002, with the majority (96.3%) of students with LD aged 6-17 spending an average of 4.8 hours per day in general education classrooms.

With the growing numbers of students with learning disabilities being included in the general education classroom and the pressures of state accountability assessments, classroom teaching has become more complex. Inclusion calls for general education teachers (GETs) and special education teachers (SETs) to form partnerships that require a new role for special educators who previously were able to provide instruction for students with learning disabilities using materials and instructional approaches in a resource room setting outside of the general education classroom. Assuming the role of an inclusion teacher, SETs instruct students with LD in inclusive general education classrooms using materials from the general education curriculum. Although some information exists on the role of the resource room teacher (Gickling, Murphy, & Mallory, 1979; Whittaker & Taylor, 1995; McQuarrie & Zarry, 1999), the role of the inclusion teacher is not clear (Idol, Nevin, Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1994; Larrivee, Semmel, & Gerber, 1997), Klingner & Vaughn, 2002; Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

Since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in the mid 1970's, through the period of the Regular Education Initiative in the 1980's, and on to the current focus on inclusion, the field of special education has been gradually yet consistently undergoing substantial changes. Such shifts have propelled marked changes in the work roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. As articulated by Ferguson and Ralph (1996), this role shift represents a movement toward merging the parallel systems of general and special education into a single unified system, and for special education teachers (SETs), this shift in role threatens a loss of the very core of what makes special education *special*.   A key

consideration is the extent to which a special education teacher's job, as it is currently designed, allows a SET to be effective in performing her daily work requirements.

Gersten, Keating and Yovanoff (1995) found a relationship between role conflict and dissatisfaction experienced by SETs in their current assignment and their intent to leave the field of special education. Their study asked the questions: Does the job of a special education teacher make sense? Is it feasible? Is it one that a well-trained, interested, special education professional can manage in order to accomplish the objective of enhancing a students' academic competence? They found significant stress occurs when, due to poor job design, a discrepancy exists between what teachers believe are their roles and responsibilities and the realities of their daily work practices. A direct relationship exists between a teacher's experience of role dissonance and her intent to quit her job as a special education teacher (Billingsley, 2004).

The value of special education, once the hallmark of instruction described as carefully planned, intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal-directed (Zigmond, 2001), has been questioned in recent years, translating into confusion regarding the role of the special educator in inclusive schools. It is increasingly difficult to find consistent viewpoints on questions such as the goals of special education programs, the roles and priorities for special educators, and the ways in which special educators should organize their activities and spend their time (Billingsley, 2004).

Special educators (SETs) have the tasks of ensuring that students with disabilities are progressing towards the same state standards as their non-disabled peers, addressing their individualized education goals, and providing opportunities to access the general education curriculum with few precedents available to guide them in this work. As districts move toward greater inclusion of students with learning disabilities in their schools (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999), special educators find themselves struggling with changing roles and often

increased responsibilities. Excessive and competing responsibilities make it difficult for special educators to function effectively in inclusive classrooms (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Billingsley, 2004).

A recent report by the Council for Exceptional Children (2000) suggested that many new special education teachers find they have been prepared for jobs that no longer exist and that they are not equipped for the jobs they face. Studies that clarify the role of the special education teacher in the age of accountability could direct the kinds of pre-service and professional development opportunities that special education teachers need in order to decrease role dissonance and increase retention of SETs in the field. As noted by Kauffman, (1994), the training special educators receive must distinguish their role from that of general education teachers. The skills needed to provide individualized, intensive, remedial instruction to a few students are different from those required to teach a whole class of students (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). What are the roles and responsibilities of a special education teacher in inclusive classroom settings? Is this job feasible, justified, and effective by virtue of design? Are special education teachers equipped to perform these roles?

1.1   PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers (SETs) and the challenges they encountered as they attempt to educate their students with learning disabilities in elementary schools. Understanding the perceived causes of these challenges and the impact of these challenges on their teaching practices helped to explain the role dissonance and role conflict described by the SETs in this study. The teachers' descriptions

of how these challenges affected their daily work and created feelings of frustration and disillusionment provide valuable insights for school administrators, faculty in teacher certification programs in institutions of higher education, and state lawmakers responsible for aiding in the development and retention of highly qualified special education teachers. Specifically, the study addressed the following two research questions:

1. What are the daily tasks that comprise a special education teachers' *role and responsibilities* in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring the progress of elementary students with LD?

2. What are the *challenges* that Special Education teachers experience in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress?

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE

Three factors contribute to the relevance of this study: (1) questions about the effectiveness of special education services in educating students with learning disabilities in elementary schools; (2) the high attrition rate of special education teachers in the field; (3) the limited research evidence on the questions investigated in this study.

When examined closely, both general and special education often fail to provide the high quality instructional environment that would improve outcomes for students with LD. Detailed studies of planning and instruction for students with LD in inclusive general education classrooms (Vaughn & Schumm, 1994; Zigmond & Baker, 1994, 1996) found these environments unlikely to provide instruction with sufficient intensity, focus, and duration to result in improved outcomes. Vaughn and Schumm found instructional planning for meeting the

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needs of students with disabilities to be idiosyncratic, incidental, inconsistent, and not part of an overall plan for an individual student in the classroom.

Educational opportunities for students with learning disabilities will be reduced if teachers are confused about their roles, if teachers' roles are structured in ways that do not allow them to use their expertise, and if substantial teaching time is lost because of non-teaching tasks. The job design of a SET often creates unrealistic demands on teacher time, including the demands of paperwork, meetings, scheduling, and extra non-teaching responsibilities. The ways in which a teacher's work is structured, both in terms of the human resource arrangements and the balances between time available to them and work demands asked of them, are often inadequate for meeting the challenges presented by a school district's efforts to integrate special education services into general education classrooms. Excessive bureaucratic requirements, particularly problems with paperwork, have been widely documented in special education (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Lenk, 1995; Council for Exceptional Children, 2000).

A second factor supporting the significance of this study is the high attrition rate among special education teachers. Several sources identify the serious problem of insufficient numbers of certified special education teachers (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt & Terhanian, 1998). The demands made of special education teachers are suggested as contributing factors to the attrition rate, in part because of the lack of adequate support, stultifying rules and outlandish expectations that induce fatigue beyond that experienced by teachers in general education classrooms (Morse, 1994). Many beginning special educators leave their positions (Miller & Brownell, 1999), and nearly half leave in the first 5 years (Singer, 1993).

A third factor supporting the significance of this study is the limited research on the issues being investigated. Little research done on schooling in the United States has been based

on studies involving the perspective of special education teachers. Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 2000) used teacher stories as a method to study the *general* education job design and develop an understanding of GET concerns and dilemmas. An in-depth look at the stories *special* education teachers can tell about challenges they face in their daily practice, the causes of the problems as they see them, the impact of these challenges on planning, instruction, and monitoring of student progress, and their suggested solutions to these problems was not found.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the related literature as a foundation for viewing teachers' reflections of their daily activities in the areas of planning, instruction and monitoring of student progress. Understanding the ways in which a teacher's daily practices, fulfilling the requirements of a job design that is constantly changing, the availability or lack of availability of program options, and adherence to old and new legislative decrees, impacted their daily work is imperative to understanding the role ambiguity faced by special education teachers today.

Grounding this study historically provides an understanding of the influences of law. This chapter begins with background information on the origin of the term learning disability and the definition of students with LD in federal legislation. Federal legislation, the catalyst for educational change, is outlined. The impacts of educational change on the role and responsibilities of special education teachers is described, a detailed review of the literature on the challenges teachers encounter in the areas of planning, instruction, and monitoring student progress follows, with a description of Duke's (1987) elements of effective practices in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress concluding the chapter.

2.1   BACKGROUND OF LEARNING DISABILITY

In 1963, Samuel Kirk used the term *learning disability* for the first time while speaking about a group of children referred to as perceptually handicapped, minimally brain damaged, and brain injured in the literature of the time. Kirk felt these terms had little educational significance, and that this group of children should be referred to by an educational term that described their basic problem; an inability to learn through conventional means (Kirk, 1981). He chose the term *learning disability (LD)*, and defined it as follows:

A learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in   one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, arithmetic, or other school subjects resulting from a psychological handicap caused by a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbances. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural and instructional factors (pg. 8).

With Samuel Kirk acting as head of the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, Senators Morse and Yarborough introduced the Children with Learning Disabilities Act (PL91-230), enacted by Congress in 1969 (Gallagher, 1997). This act helped to legitimize the concept of learning disabilities through the adoption of Kirk's definition of LD. As a result, federal funding for state programs for children and youth with LD became available, and states began to provide services to this newly defined group of exceptional learners.

In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed the EAHCA as PL 94-142. Yell (1998) refers to this law as "the most significant increase in the role of the federal government to date" (p.62). This landmark legislation mandated that all schools across the nation provide services to all students with disabilities who require specialized instruction, including the recently recognized students with LD. The definition read as followed:

The term children with specific learning disabilities means those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such a term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mentally retardation, of emotional disturbances, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage (Yell, 1998).

Salend (1999) summarized the major provisions of P.L 94-142 that significantly affected the education of students with learning disabilities as:

1. All children with disabilities, regardless of the nature and severity of their handicap, must be provided a free and appropriate education.

2. Each child with a disability will have an individualized education plan that is based on and tailored to address each child's unique learning needs.

3. Children with disabilities will be educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-handicapped peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

4. Students with disabilities must have access to all areas of school participation.

5. Children with disabilities and their families are guaranteed rights with respect to nondiscriminatory tests, confidentiality, and due process.

With the passage of EAHCA (P.L.94-142), Congress established a constitutionally-based right to an education for students with disabilities. This statute provided a mechanism by which Congress hoped to ensure equal access to appropriate educational services for students with disabilities. This law mandated (a) a free and appropriate public education of individuals with

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disabilities (FAPE), (b) in the least restrictive setting (LRE), (c) based on an individualized education plan (IEP).

2.2   FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Special Education law has not evolved in a vacuum but has been influenced by events on a broad legal scale. Historical precedence for the provision of education services to persons with disabilities is found in the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that mandates equal protection for all individuals under the law. The Fourteenth Amendment (constitutional law) provided the legal platform for litigation law (Mills v. Board of Education, 1972; Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1972); litigation contributed to the development of federal statutory law (Public Law 94-142) which mandated the right to a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities (Yell, 1998). Court decisions and legislation have profoundly affected the form that special education has taken in the U.S., which in turn has influenced the questions posed by researchers about special education.

Students with learning disabilities have historically been excluded from the majority of mainstream educational reform initiatives and, as policymakers developed new standards and requirements for teaching and learning, needs of students with disabilities were often overlooked (Kochlar, West, & Taymans, 2000). This oversight reinforced the notion of inequality since students with disabilities were not held to the same standards as their peers and general education teachers were not held to the same levels of accountability for educating them (Thurlow, House,

Scott, & Ysseldyke, 2000).   Thus, students with disabilities played no part in the initial accountability and assessment systems of schools.

IDEA responded to the issue of accountability in its' reauthorization as PL 105-17 in June of 1997. Section 612 of the amendments required states to establish performance goals and indicators for students with disabilities that were more closely aligned with goals for students without disabilities; mandated the inclusion of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments with appropriate accommodations or the use of alternative assessment methods; and outlined new Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requirements including (a) information on how the individual's disability affected his or her involvement in the general curriculum, (b) measurable goals and objectives that were more closely related to the general curriculum, and (c) regular assessment of rate of progress toward annual goals. While IDEA remained theoretically focused on the individualization of a student's educational program, the 1997 Amendments added the emphasis of services within the general education classroom. Many of these changes were attempts to address concerns about special education efficacy that had arisen in the research.

During the 1980's and early 1990's, several initiatives were instituted that promote *excellence* and *equity* in the education of all students (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Issues brought before the courts in this time frame dealt with testing, labeling, placement, rights to access to the general education curriculum, and determining the least restrictive environment (LRE). These initiatives included the Regular Education Initiative, the Inclusion movement, and initiatives relating to assessment. A brief description of each initiative follows.

2.3   REGULAR EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Concerns in the 1980's that special education had become an overused and ineffective response to the needs of difficult-to-teach students led to calls for reform (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986). Coined the Regular Education Initiative (REI), this movement was a call for a closer relationship between regular and special education. In keeping with the LRE provision of the law and responding to an increasing amount of data from research indicating students appeared to fare better in regular education classrooms, the REI focused on moving more special education supports into the general education setting. Supporters of the REI advocated for the restructuring of the educational system to eliminate the existing dual system emphasizing two distinct types of students, special ones and general ones (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Stainback and Stainback pointed out that a dual system established "artificial barriers among educators that promote competition and alienation" (p 107).

Opponents questioned whether the restructuring eliminating dual systems, as suggested by Will (1986) and Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987), could be sensitive to the individual differences of students with disabilities and not threaten the services they must have to meet their educational needs. Concerned with what effect REI would have on the special education system, Kauffman (1989) suggested that REI advocates were rejecting the basic assumptions that form the foundation of special education services he characterized as:

1. Some students learning needs are very different from most in ways that are specific regardless of receiving the same general education as their peers, and special education is required to meet their individual needs. In the context of public education, these students should be identified as exceptional. Excluding gifted and talented students, exceptional students are handicapped.

2. Not all teachers are equipped to teach all students. Special expertise is required of special educators because such students present unique instructional problems. Most teachers are neither equipped by training nor unable within the context of their usual class organization to ensure an equal opportunity for students with disabilities. Special services will be compromised or lost unless both funding and students are specifically targeted.

3. Students who require special education services, as well as the funds and personnel required to support them, must be clearly identified to ensure appropriate services. Special services will be compromised or lost unless both funding and students are specifically targeted.

4. Education outside the typical education classroom is sometimes required for some part of the school day to meet some students' needs. Removal of a student from the typical classroom may be required to (a) provide more intensive, individualized instruction, (b) provide instruction in skills already mastered by non-disabled peers in the typical class, or (c) to ensure the appropriate education of other students without disabilities in the typical classroom environment.

5. The options of special education outside the typical class and special provisions within the typical class are required to ensure equal educational opportunity for students with disabilities. The most important equity issue is the quality of instruction, not the place of instruction.

2.4   INCLUSION

On the heels of the REI came a call for full inclusion. Although many proponents of the REI supported the full continuum of service delivery options, proponents of full inclusion advocate that all students, regardless of disability or learning problem, should receive their education services in the general education classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). When fully implemented, inclusion discontinues the continuum of educational placement options by requiring the availability of all supports and services enabling students to achieve successfully be available in the general education classroom.

According to Rogers (1993), inclusion is "the commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend" (p. 1). She further adds that inclusion involves bringing the support services to the child rather than moving the child to the support services and requires only that the child benefit from being in the class, rather than having to keep up with other students. Such a definition supports the IDEA's least restrictive environment mandate:

To the maximum extent appropriate handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other core facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes and with the use of supplementary aid and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (U.S.C. 1400(140)).

Along with the LRE, another component of the 1997 Amendments supporting the philosophy of inclusion are required when a child will not participate with non-disabled students in the regular education classroom (Huefner, 2000). If a more restricted environment is being

proposed that will limit or eliminate such participation, then a justification of such placement must be provided before such a decision is made.

Two studies investigated the placement practices for students with LD from 1978 to 1989 (McLeskey & Pacchiano, 1994) and from 1988-1995 (McLeskey, Henry, and Axelrod, (1999) using data from the Annual Reports to Congress on the Implementation of P.L. 94-142 prepared by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Programs. These data represent all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

McLeskey and Pacchiano (1994) focused on the placement practices for students with LD because federal reports "often do not differentiate students with mild or severe disabilities when categorizing students with emotional disabilities and mental retardation" (p. 509). In addition, students with severe manifestations of the above disabilities are often educated outside the typical school setting. On the other hand, McLeskey and Pacchiano found that most students with LD (98.5% during 1989-1990) were educated in typical school settings, with only a minimal number of students with LD educated outside the typical school setting.

Data for McLeskey and Pacchiano's 1994 study were taken from the Annual Reports to Congress from 1978-1989. In this 11-year period the majority of students with LD were educated in one of the three following settings: regular or typical class, resource room, or separate class. Regular or typical class settings included those students who receive special education and related services for less than 21% of the school day; resource room students received special education and related services for 21-60% of the school day, and separate class students were those who received special education and related services for more than 60% of the school day (U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

Cumulative placement rates (CPR) recommended by Danielson and Bellamy (1989) were used to describe the change in placement rates over the 11- year period of their study. CPR denotes the number of children per 1,000 found in a particular placement. The CPR was computed by dividing the number of students with LD served in a particular setting by the total school age population. This number was then multiplied by one thousand. Thus, a CPR of 40 means 40 students out of 1,000 in the general population receive educational services in the same type of classroom setting. The CPR provides a statistic that is comparable to the incidence of students with LD who are served in a particular education setting, while controlling for changes in the overall student population over time (McLeskey & Pacchiano, 1994).

CPR's were reported for separate class settings and for combined regular class and resource settings. Data for the combined regular class and resource settings collected during that investigation was "strongly influenced by the rising identification rates for these students" (McLeskey & Pacchiano, 1994, p. 511) making it more difficult to interpret the data.

Results from their study revealed that the CPR for both separate and regular/resource settings had significantly increased over the 11-year time frame of the study. From 1979-1989, there was a 90% increase in the proportion of students with LD served in separate classrooms. This increase was also portrayed in the proportion of students with LD served in separate class settings compared to the overall number of students with LD. The proportion increased from 17.3% to 21.7% over the 11 years, resulting in an increase of 4.4%, while the proportion of all students with LD served in the regular/resource setting decreased 4.3% from 81% to 76.8% over the 11 years.

McLeskey and Waldron (2000) continued this investigation of the placement trends of students with LD by examining the Annual Reports to Congress from 1988-89 thru 1994-95.

They looked at four placement settings for students with LD: general education class, resource room, separate class, and separate school. This study used a similar CPR index, computed by dividing the number of students with LD served in a particular setting by the total school age population. This number was then multiplied by 1,000 to indicate the number of students in a typical school of 1,000 students who would receive services for a learning disability. Results from this study revealed the identification rates of students with LD was increasing, as was the overall trend of these students receiving a majority of their daily instruction in the general classroom setting.

With an increase of students with LD being served in inclusive settings, there have been reports of a decrease in individualized programming (Deno & Maruyama, 1990; Espin, Deno, & Albayrak- Kaymack, 1998; Zigmond & Baker, 1996; Heward, 2003). Espin et al., compared IEP's for students with a specific learning disability in reading in grades 1 through 6, in resource programs or inclusion programs, to answer the question of individualized education programs in resource and inclusive settings: How individualized are they?

Zigmond & Baker (1995) summarized findings from three studies to compare the efficacy of different models for providing special education services in general education. Study One examined outcomes for students with LD who remained in general education classrooms full time. Study Two involved reorganizing special education and remedial services in one school to provide more assistance to students in the general education classroom. Some pull-out services remained, but the majority of special education services were provided in the general education classroom where the SET worked with the GET. Study Three altered the resource room program to include CBM. Reading achievement for students with LD was assessed in all

three studies with pre/post comparisons. In all cases, the outcomes for students with LD were disappointing.

The results of these studies indicate the emphasis on individualized programming in special education decreases in inclusive settings. Zigmond and Baker concluded that special education in inclusive programs is, by design, no longer special. Inclusion is a service delivery model that emphasizes the shared responsibility of special and general educators. Inclusion is a collaborative relationship that is difficult for many teachers because "in regular education, the system dictates the curriculum; in special education, the child dictates the curriculum' (Lieberman, 1985, p. 514).

In the article "Enabling or Disabling? Observations on Changes in Special Education", Kauffman, McGee and Brigham (2004) write that special education has increasingly been losing its way in the pursuit of inclusion, with general education now seen by many as the only place where fair and equitable schooling is possible and where the opportunity to learn is extended to all equally. The argument has become that special education is good only as long as it is invisible, or nearly so, an indistinguishable part of a general education system that accommodates all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Kauffman, et al. 2004). The question left unanswered is, what is the role of a special education teacher in inclusive classrooms?

In the opinion of Crockett and Kauffman (1999) inclusive, but not always adequate instructional approaches for students with learning disabilities threaten to marginalize special education from the center of school reform. They found systematic data confirming that reform efforts pay little substantive attention to special education or to students with disabilities; yet school reform emphasizes the importance of curriculum, academic standards, and student

accountability for all students. "Internationally, the public calls for competitive standards, accountability, equity, and excellence for all students at the same time it voices concerns about opportunities to learn for those least equipped to compete" (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, pg. 76). Not coincidentally, there is no research available on the role of special education teachers in school reform, either.

2.5   ASSESSMENT

In 1997, amendments of the IDEA became the most prescriptive of the laws with respect to the role of assessment of results as part of the education of students with disabilities (Shriner, 2000). With these revisions came a demand for accountability for the yearly progress of students with disabilities, including a focus on the inclusion of data regarding this population in public reports (Ysseldyke et al., 2004).   More specifically, IDEA 1997 mandated that states establish performance goals for students with disabilities that are consistent with those for students without disabilities (20 U.S. C).   Additionally, students with disabilities were required to be included in state and district assessment programs and the results of the assessments be reported in the same manner as those of students without disabilities (20 U.S.C).

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, legislation also mandating increased accountability for all students. It states the following:

> The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant
>
> opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency
>
> on state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. (20 U.S.C.

6301). One way in which this purpose can be accomplished is by meeting the

educational needs of low-achieving children in our nation's highest-poverty schools,

limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities,

Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of

reading assistance (20 U.S.C-630(1).

The goal of the NCLB Act of 2001 was to reform the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, with the goal of closing the achievement gap between students who are disadvantaged, demonstrate disabilities, or represent diverse cultural, ethnic, or linguistic groups and their peers. The Act was based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents and an emphasis on proven teaching methods. Hayes (2002) describes these aspects of NCLB that relate to students with disabilities:

1. States have greater flexibility in using their federal funding, with freedom to target up to 50 percent of federal non-Title 1 dollars under the Act to programs that will have the most positive impact on the students they serve, including students with disabilities.

2. Assessments must provide for adaptations and accommodations for students with disabilities as defined in the IDEA.

3. Assessment results and state progress objectives must be reported by student groups based on poverty, race and ethnicity, disability and limited English proficiency.

4. There is an increased support for students attending schools that persistently fail to meet their state standards. Districts must provide Title 1 for low-achieving disadvantaged students in the school to obtain supplemental services, tutoring, after school services, or summer school programs.

5. Research-based reading instruction is to be provided to children from K-3 who may have reading difficulties, are at risk of being referred to special education based on these difficulties, have been evaluated but not identified under the IDEA, are being serviced under the IDEA as a child with a specific learning disability related to reading, have difficulties with reading, or have limited English Proficiency.

NCLB requires accountability for program effectiveness and improved reading achievement in K-3 students, with mandatory statewide accountability testing beginning in the third grade. Results from these tests are made available in annual report cards so parents and other stakeholders can measure a child's individual progress, the progress of students in the school by grade levels, and the progress of students across the state in reading. Schools are held accountable for improving the performance of all student groups on these tests, including students with disabilities. This accountability system has brought new meaning to the term "high stakes testing." As reflected in IDEA and NCLB, current policies require that students with disabilities: (a) have access to the general curriculum, (b) have their progress in the curriculum monitored, and (c) participate in accountability assessments in a meaningful way (Danielson, Doolittle, & Bradley, 2005).

High academic standards are currently the focus of education with recent federal legislation like IDEA supporting the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in high stakes testing. With the numbers of students with learning disabilities receiving their specialized educational programming in the general education classroom, three central teaching situations described by Duke are critical if students with LD are to be successful in inclusive classroom settings. These critical areas of teaching are planning, instructing, and monitoring the progress of students with disabilities.

2.6   DUKE'S VISION OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE

To say that no one approach to teaching is invariably the best is not to justify every teacher simply doing whatever he or she wants (Duke, 1987). There must be a vision of teaching that frames what teachers do to promote student learning, that denotes what specific data must be collected to make decisions about instructional improvement, and that assists in recognizing how students benefit from instruction. Duke defines these three elements of teaching excellence as planning, instructing, and monitoring student progress.

Duke's (1987) vision integrated key features from Adler's threefold vision of teaching, Purkey's vision of invitational teaching, Hunter's clinical teaching, Bloom's teaching for mastery, and direct instruction theory. Duke's intention was "not to create an 'ultimate'vision of teaching, but to identify common situations in which teacher skill and judgment appear to be crucial to student achievement and development" (p. 66).

Duke (1987) does not specify whether his ideas are particular to general educators, special educators, or all teachers; however, his vision has been applied to teachers of students with and without disabilities and for students from K-12. It is a vision important for all teachers of today's diverse classrooms where all students are expected to meet specific educational standards. He provides detailed descriptions of the three common situations where teacher skill and judgment are crucial for student achievement, and defines them as "as sense of *planning* that precedes *instruction* and of the *outcomes* when that instruction proves effective" (p. 57). The three situations necessary to promote student achievement are defined as follows:

1.   Planning is the starting point. Planning focuses on the instruction of specific objectives, helping to frame the day's lessons. Duke specifically stated that when planning,

teachers must take into consideration the abilities of all students, therefore, planning for individual students is necessary.

2. Instruction is the actual delivery of content material based on state and district objectives. Whether they are teaching content material for the first time, re-teaching previously unlearned material, or reviewing material, teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of a diverse group of students.

3. Monitoring student progress involves frequent teacher checks through questioning during lessons, class work, homework, and tests to ensure student understanding of objectives.

A review of literature related to the teaching effectiveness of special educators resulted in findings that focused specifically on the three key situations in Dukes' (1987) vision for teaching excellence: the necessity for planning, instruction, and monitoring of student progress as critical for student success. Duke believes that without a vision of teaching excellence, educators can only make arbitrary guesses about how to meet the needs of students (Duke, 1987). However, in the age of accountability, there is no room for arbitrary guesses.

2.7   CHALLENGES IN PLANNING

There is quite a lot of literature describing effective practices in planning (King-Sears & Carpenter, 1997; Schumm & Vaughn, 1992: Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein, & Samuell, 1995: Vaughn & Schumm, 1994); instruction (Bos & Vaughn, 1998; deBettencourt, 1999; Espin, Deno, & Kaymak, 1998; Johnson & Pugach, 1990); and progress monitoring (Marston, 1989; Deno, Fuchs, Marston & Shin, 2001; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Hamlett, 1989; Nolet &

McLaughlin, 2000). However, most of these studies investigated the practices of general educators describing what they do to meet the needs of students with LD in inclusive instructional settings. There is very limited research asking special education teachers to describe their role in educating students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings. Excluding special education teachers as participants has denied the field of special education an understanding of the role of special education teachers in the education of students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom.

The research literature also provides data on what general education teachers do *not* do in the areas of planning, instruction, and monitoring of student progress of students with LD in their classrooms. For example, a research syntheses conducted on effective instructional practices for students with LD included many practices that general educators find to be infeasible and unreasonable for students with learning disabilities (Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). These included making instruction clear and specific, controlling the difficulty of tasks so students are challenged yet maintain high levels of success, using small groups of six or less students that are interactive and flexible, providing interactive dialogue between students and teachers and between students, and employing strategies that provide students a plan of action to guide them through academic activities (Vaughn, et al., 2000).

Vaughn et al. (2000) concluded general education teachers seemed willing to make some of the more subtle changes in their teaching practices to include effective strategies for students with LD as long as they were easy to implement and benefited a large number of students. This, unfortunately, did not include the individualization strategies that can assist students with LD in being successful in the general education environment.

Schumm and Vaughn (1992) studied the planning practices of general education teachers in inclusive classrooms and found that although those teachers reported having adequate planning time, they spent little time planning for this population. The authors attributed this to the general educators lack of training in working with students with learning disabilities. Vaughn and Schumm completed a follow up study in 1994 that found that planning for general education teachers was influenced by administrative mandates to cover outlined objectives, so if students fell behind in their acquisition of new information, general education teachers felt the only recourse was to continue at the same pace to move through the curriculum. They found it unlikely that accommodations and adaptations would be made for students with LD in the general education classroom and stressed the need for outside (special education) services to ensure the success of students with LD in the general education classroom. Vaughn and Schumm (1994) concluded that in preparing students with LD for inclusion, the special education teacher should prepare them for the reality that as they progress through the grade levels, general education teachers may be less inclined to assume responsibility for accommodating their individual differences. In fact, the expectations of the general education teachers in the Vaughn and Schumm study found that teachers believe students with LD should keep up with their general education peers and it is the role of the teacher to prepare all students for the "real world."

Schumm, Vaughn, Hager, McDowell, Rothlein, and Samuell (1995) found through interviews, classroom observations, teacher reflections and surveys that general education teachers do not create individualized written plans for students with LD. Students with LD were required to learn the same content and complete the same work as their peers without disabilities. Because of the accountability concerns of covering content objectives in a designated time,

general education teachers in their study felt the need to move on regardless of whether students understood the content material or had reached mastery level in the content.

Whittaker and Taylor (1995) surveyed special education directors to determine the amount of planning time special educators have in their district and what tasks they are expected to accomplish during that time. Effective inclusion models require special educators to accomplish tasks such as modifying and creating general education classroom materials, team teaching, developing alternative instructional strategies, and assisting in preparing for and administering large scale assessments. The Whittaker and Taylor study confirmed previous findings that the majority of teachers across grade levels had 30-45 minutes of planning time per day to accomplish those tasks. How do SETs in today's schools accomplish their daily tasks, and how much time do they have available to complete those tasks?

2.8   CHALLENGES IN INSTRUCTION

Since its inception, special education has been an accumulation of educational innovations whose purpose is to maximize the chances of learning success for students with unique learning needs. With inclusion, the responsibility of special education has extended beyond the special education classroom into the general education classroom. There is a greater demand on general educators to provide the differentiated and individualized instruction that has been the hallmark of special education. Educators in today's schools are expected to be able to use a wide variety of instructional strategies tailored to meet the diverse educational needs of students with disabilities. This is a challenging task considering that students with disabilities need more than

the typical routine instructional adaptations made for any student; they need substantial and specialized adaptations to address the diversity of cognitive abilities, behavior patterns, and learning styles.

Schumm and Vaughn (1991) conducted a study that assessed the willingness of general educators to make adaptations for students with disabilities in their classrooms. Specifically, they looked at the extent to which general educators found instructional accommodations desirable and feasible. A limitation of this study was the authors did not provide a description of the composition of the special education population found in the general education classrooms of the participants in this study nor was the range of academic abilities of the students identified as disabled defined.

Focus group sessions were conducted with teachers from two elementary, two middle, and two high schools in a metropolitan school district. A total of 93 participants were selected from these schools, consisting of 25 elementary teachers, 23 middle school teachers, and 45 high school teachers. All the middle and high school teachers were English teachers because all students in this district had to take English each year at the secondary level.

The authors designed the Adaptation Evaluation Instrument (AEI) to assess the desirability and feasibility of making 30 adaptations in the general education classroom. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured using the Cronbach coefficient alpha, with reliability coefficients of .97 for the desirability subscale and .95 for the feasibility subscale.

Teachers were instructed to rate each adaptation using a Likert-type scale for identifying feasibility and desirability. Desirability was defined as how much the teachers would like to implement the adaptation in the classroom and feasibility was defined as how practical it would be to actually implement the adaptation. The data obtained from the Likert scale was converted

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to interval data by a calculation of the mean and standard deviation of the feasibility and desirability ratings for each item on the instrument.

The items found to be the most feasible adaptations were those with a score of one standard deviation above the total mean feasibility rating. The adaptations considered as the most feasible for general educators included: establishing a routine appropriate for the students with disabilities, providing reinforcement and encouragement, establishing personal relationships with students with disabilities, establishing their expectations for these students, and involving all students in whole class activities. The least feasible adaptations were those with a mean score of one standard deviation below the overall mean of feasibility. Adaptations viewed as the least feasible included: communicating with students with disabilities, adapting the regular instructional materials, using alternative materials, using computers, and providing any individualized instruction.

Items that were one standard deviation above the total mean desirability rating were identified as the most desirable. The adaptations identified as most desirable among general educators were: providing reinforcement and encouragement, establishing personal relationships with students with disabilities, and involving students with disabilities in the whole class activities. Least desirable adaptations were those items scoring one standard deviation below the mean desirability rating and included: making long-range plans, adjusting the physical arrangement of their classroom, adapting regular instructional materials, having to use alternative materials, and adapting the scoring, assessment and grading criteria for student performance.

In general, Schumm and Vaughn concluded that teachers found adaptations more desirable than feasible. They concluded adaptations that require little individualization in forms of planning, instruction, and altering the environment are viewed by general educators as the

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most feasible adaptations. The least feasible included adapting regular instructional materials and providing individualized instruction, which, as noted earlier, are the hallmarks of special education. While the teachers in this study seemed to be willing to make subtle changes in their teaching practices, the changes needed to be perceived as easy to implement and of benefit to all students. Unfortunately, this does not include providing individualized instruction for students with disabilities to increase their chances of making learning gains and being successful in the general education environment.

York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke and Ghere (2005) convened a focus group of 16 teachers serving students with moderate and severe disabilities in inclusive education settings and asked them to describe their work as special educators in inclusive settings. They described themselves as having extensive and overlapping roles and responsibilities, with a substantial number and variety of job responsibilities clustered under four major roles: developing individual student programs, coordinating program implementation for all students, designing and providing instruction to students, and directing the work of paraprofessionals. Responsibilities included: assessing student abilities, developing schedules, creating and communicating a vision of special education, facilitating effective collaboration with general education teachers, learning new curricula, and justifying program budgets.

Participants in the York-Barr et al. (2005) study were asked to identify the various kinds of activities they carry out in a typical day and week at school. By compiling responses across participants, seven general categories of daily special educator activity were identified. They are listed in order from those activities requiring the most amount of time to those involving the least amount of time daily: direct instruction with students, communication with other staff, working

with paraprofessionals, preparing curricular and instructional materials, unscheduled or unexpected issues, general school duties, and non-instructional paperwork.

Instructional and assessment expertise were listed as requirements for special education teachers, specifically in the following areas: conducting assessments that address a wide array of student abilities; providing alternative formats for tests and assessments based on individual student needs; analyzing and interpreting data from tests and from assessments conducted by general education teachers; knowing the scope and sequence of the general education curriculum; appropriately selecting curricular materials; developing individualized instructional adaptations; and teaching.

Special educators in this study noted that regular time for planning was almost non-existent, with a significant negative impact on collaborative practices with general educators evident in their work.

Challenges to completing these responsibilities resulted from the shift from a traditional, centralized model of special education service provision to a new more inclusive and decentralized model of service provision for students with moderate disabilities. The nature of their work was captured metaphorically as that of an air traffic controller. This metaphor served to emphasize the importance of keeping the vision of special education in clear focus while dealing with myriad responsibilities. This vision was articulated by a group of special educators working with students with moderate and severe disabilities. The question remains of how teachers of students with learning disabilities would characterize their work.

In a survey conducted by Morvant and Gersten (1995), SETs felt well-prepared and knowledgeable in implementing instructional methods, but in need of more preparation in the area of completing paperwork requirements, behavior management,, and collaborating/

consulting with classroom teachers. In the same study involving interviews of 17 special education teachers, these teachers frequently reported feeling they were not able to conduct the work the way they believed they were trained to do it. In most cases, the issues for these teachers were not their own levels of preparation for the specific tasks that made up their jobs, but the lack of time, support, and belief in the purpose of the tasks they performed on a daily basis.

Morvant and Gersten found that almost three-fourths of the teachers they interviewed believed there was a conflict between meeting the individual instructional needs of students with disabilities and the demands of the general education system. For example, SETs said the test-oriented nature of the curriculum in the general education classroom was contributing to an inflexible instructional environment not conducive to individualized instruction.

2.9   CHALLENGES IN THE MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

The 1997 amendments to IDEA incorporated critical requirements regarding access to and participation and progress in the general curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The most recently reauthorized legislation (IDEA, 2004) maintains this critical focus, requiring the individualized education program to specify how the student will be involved in and progress through the general education curriculum. Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS2; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) found that students in special education were only receiving a basic level of access to the general curriculum. That is, although they were present to receive the subject matter, they did not achieve cognitive access to the subject

matter, and this failure to connect with the general curriculum is often a direct result of teachers not adapting for individual differences (Danielson, Doolittle, & Bradley, 2005).

General outcome measures have been developed and implemented to provide teachers with reliable means of assessing student performance in the curriculum. There are three key assessment features that differentiate general outcome measurement from other classroom-based assessment (Fuchs & Deno, 1991). First, measurement is standardized, meaning the behaviors to be measured and the procedures for measuring those behaviors are prescribed. Second, the focus of the measurement is long term. Third, testing methods and content reflect the performance desired from the student at the end of the year, thereby acting as a representative of the curriculum presented all year.

One general outcome measure is Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), developed under the leadership of Deno. Standardized procedures, long-range consistency, and an integrated focus on the many skills and strategies cumulatively addressed in the curriculum are CBM distinctive features (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1999).

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is a type of progress monitoring system that measures student performance and identifies instructional needs. The goal of CBM, according to Deno et al., (2001) was to establish a system that teachers could use efficiently; that would produce accurate, meaningful information that could answer questions about the effectiveness of programs in producing academic growth; and that would provide information helpful for teachers' planning of instructional programs.

Because of these features, CBM can offer teachers two types of information. First, the students scores, graphed over time, represent overall progress and rates of overall growth. Second, the scores allow for diagnostic problem solving, since teachers can analyze the student's

skills by diagnosing the nature of the errors, then being able to determine what type of instruction to provide that student.

In 1989, Fuchs and Fuchs conducted a study to investigate the effects of the use of CBM to enhance instructional programming for students with mild disabilities. Participants of this study were 29 special educators working in 16 schools in a southeastern metropolitan area. The teachers were instructed to select two students with mild disabilities who had goals that specifically addressed reading. Of the 53 students with mild disabilities selected for this study, 41 were identified as having learning disabilities and 12 were identified as having emotional/behavioral disorders. Students classified as LD exhibited more than one standard deviation between achievement and cognitive/intellectual functioning when provided with appropriate opportunities for learning (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1989).

Of the 29 teachers, 20 were assigned to an experimental reading CBM group, consisting of 36 students, and 9 were assigned to a control reading group, consisting of 17 students. All students participated in an achievement test, the reading comprehension subtest of the Stanford Achievement Test, and a standardized test of recall, the Recall Test. The students in the experimental group also participated in a CBM index of reading comprehension, which involved curriculum-based recall and cloze tests.

After 15 weeks, the CBM group was separated into two levels based on measurement alone or measurement with evaluation. Measurement was defined as occurring when curriculum measures were administered, scored, and graphed. Evaluation occurred when an instructional modification was implemented for at least 2.5 weeks as a result of the data. In the measurement only group, labeled M-Only, there were 15 students, and in the measurement plus evaluation group, or M+E group, there were 21 students.

Analysis of the achievement data for the recall pretest showed the following means: M=6.80 for the M-only group, and M=9.65 for the M+E group, and M=10.35 for the control group. The results after the ANOVA revealed that the differences among the groups were not significant. However, a slope was calculated using a least-squares regression equation for the data of each student in the two CBM implementation groups revealing average weekly gains on CBM assessments. The slope for the M+E group exceeded the slope of the M-only group with an effect size of .86.

In conclusion, Fuchs and Fuchs noted that when teachers not only collect CBM data, but use CBM indicators of student learning to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and to experiment with alternative instructional elements, student achievement appears to be enhanced. If this research is reliable, the assumption would be that special education teachers continue to collect CBM data and use data to drive instructional decisions. The question asked is, are SETs collecting CBM data, and are they analyzing those data to inform their instructional practices?

In the age of accountability, progress monitoring is crucial. School districts are responsible for accounting for student progress towards state standards, including students with disabilities. Therefore, educators must possess a reliable form of measurement to routinely assess student performance. CBM is a measurement system that can be used by educators to evaluate student progress and instructional effectiveness by incorporating data on student achievement into the daily instructional decision-making of educators (Deno, 1985). Whether or not SETs implement curriculum based measurements, and in what form, remains to be observed in this study. How do special education teachers monitor the progress of their students?

2.10   CHALLENGES IN JOB DESIGN

Special educators experience a range of role problems (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Gersten, 2001; Morvant & Gersten, 1995; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997), and some evidence suggests that they experience significantly greater role problems than general educators. Role problems include role ambiguity, where necessary information is not provided for a given position; role conflict, where inconsistent behaviors are expected from an individual; role dissonance, where a teacher's own role expectations differ from the expectations of others; and role overload, or having more to do than is reasonable. These various role problems are related, for example, role overload can lead to role conflict if SETs feel torn between tasks they feel are critical and the tasks they feel are simply burdensome requirements that demand their time. Special educators who experience prolonged and excessive role problems are more likely to report greater stress, less job satisfaction, less commitment, and greater intent to leave than their colleagues in general education.

Role ambiguity is an issue for SETs as their work continues to shift from special education classroom instruction to collaborative roles as inclusion specialists in general education classrooms. Klingner and Vaughn (2002) described how a highly qualified, veteran LD teacher struggled to make sense of her new role as an LD inclusion specialist. They described how she had to adjust and change roles depending on the personalities and preferences of the GETs as well as the needs of the students she served. She asked, "I understand we are supposed to kind of like be team teachers in a way. But I'd like to know, what really am I supposed to do?" (pg. 25).

A recent report written by a special task force of CEC on the crisis in working conditions for special educators, Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners: An Action Agenda to Achieve

Quality Conditions for Teaching and Learning (CEC, 2000) stressed the importance of clarifying job design through defining and redefining the role of special educators as one of the key components in its action agenda. The agenda stressed ongoing professional development and noted that SETs should play an active role in shaping professional development activities and have opportunities to participate in meaningful activities. The report also described the isolation felt by SETs, and lobbied for an increase in opportunities for meaningful interaction with colleagues, and supported an increase in offering clerical and technological supports for SETs dealing with the paperwork burden. These were all issues highlighted in earlier works of Morvant & Gersten, 1995; Billingsley & Cross, 1992, Rosenholtz (1989), and again in this study. In considering role design, Gersten (2001) asks, "Does the job, with all it entails, make sense? Is it feasible? Is it one that a well-trained, interested, special education professional can manage in order to accomplish their main objective-enhancing students' academic, social, and vocational competence?" (p. 51)

2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Changes in our educational delivery system have increased the complexity of the role of special educators. The normalization and mainstreaming movements that have occurred over the last 25 years have made the inclusion of students with special needs in general classrooms more common (Reynolds, et al., 1987; Stainback, Stainback & Jackson, 1992). As a result, SETs are instructing classrooms of students with wide ranges of academic and behavioral needs in varied instructional arrangements (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). SETs are also increasingly called upon to consult with and support general educators in their instruction of students with special needs in

general classroom settings, further complicating the role of the special educator. Exactly what the special educator's role is in the inclusion model has been ill-defined, creating role conflict and ambiguity.

A review of the literature from 2000-2005 found 12 studies describing the practices of general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. A study by Klingner and Vaughn (2002) described the changing roles and responsibilities of special education teachers in resource room settings for students with learning disabilities. The York-Barr et al., (2005) study describes the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers working with students in life skills classrooms. The conclusion of the Klingner & Vaughn study said that the voices of special education teachers in inclusive classroom settings have not been heard.

The question asked when reviewing the research was, "To what extent do the problems experienced by teachers impact their teaching?" Here, teaching includes time spent in planning, time spent in instructional methods and presentation, opportunity to teach, and opportunity to adequately monitor the academic progress of their students. If challenges in performing the tasks of teaching create a loss of a sense of teaching efficacy, ineffective practices, burnout and attrition may result.

If special educators are to thrive, then schools must become hospitable places for adults to work and to develop professionally (Crockett, 2001). The field of special education has a strong intervention research base that special educators need to use in their daily work. Taking care of students with disabilities requires that care also be directed toward their teachers, what they do, and the complex and difficult conditions in which they work (Billingsley, 2004). A holistic view of special educators' work conditions is needed to sustain special educators' commitment to their work and to make it possible for them to use their expertise.

The field of special education may need to "negotiate a common ground of purpose" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 140) because special education is fraught with differing opinions. A crucial need today is to negotiate a common ground of purpose sufficiently generous, compelling, and plausible that it can unify teachers who work with students with special needs in inclusive classroom settings. This study, through the analysis of 17 SET's descriptions of their roles and responsibilities and the challenges they encounter while providing services to students with learning disabilities, answered the question: what are the challenges of being a special education teacher and do those challenges impact her ability to do her job?

3   METHODS

3.1   RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the study design and methods of inquiry and analysis that were used to conduct it. The chapter consists of 5 sections: (1) an overview of the study; (2) the major concepts defined; (3) data sources, collection, and preparation (4) collection and preparation of evidence; and (5) treatment and analysis of evidence.

3.1.1   Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the daily activities of special education teachers, (SETs), in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress, the challenges they encounter and the impact of those challenges on their role and responsibilities in elementary classrooms. The results of this study should be helpful to school districts, institutions of higher education, and currently practicing special education teachers to better define the roles of special education teachers. A better understanding of the job design of a SET can assist in answering questions about the role dissonance experienced by many teachers; identifying the impacts of the challenges they encounter may offer some guidance in addressing concerns related to the effectiveness of special education, concerns with the high teacher attrition rates; and identify pre-

service and professional development activities that might bridge the gap between what SETs know to do in their jobs and what they are currently doing in the jobs they hold.

The research questions answered in this study were:

1. What are the daily tasks that comprise a special education teacher's *role and responsibilities* in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring the progress of elementary students with LD?

2. What are the *challenges* that special education teachers experience in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress?

A focus group methodology was used to collect data from 17 special education teachers in elementary schools in Western Pennsylvania. Focus groups provide a forum for bringing forward a range of individual experiences around a common topic by promoting an exchange of perspectives and creating shared knowledge within the group (Krueger, 1994). Open-ended inquiry, a cornerstone of focus group methodology, results in qualitatively rich data intended to both enlighten and challenge thinking about existing practice. *Focus groups are an interactive method concerned with understanding attitudes of participants rather than just measuring the attitudes*. Focus groups provide data that describe not only what people think, but why they think like they do (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Focus groups typically have these characteristics: people are assembled in a series of groups who possess certain characteristics and provide data of a qualitative nature in a focused discussion. Krueger and Casey elaborate on when to use focus groups: (1) when insights are needed in exploratory or preliminary studies, (2) when the purpose of the study is to uncover factors relating to complex behavior, (3) when the researcher desires ideas to emerge from the

group, and (4) when the researcher places high value on capturing open-ended comments from the participants.

Krueger (1994) emphasizes that focus groups are naturalistic because the environment they present is one in which participants are influencing others and are also influenced by others just as they are in life. Focus groups are a study of social interaction where participants "influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion" (Krueger, 1994, pg. 6). The focus group methodology was a good choice for this study because this study investigated the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of groups of special educators working in inclusive settings.

Two focus groups were conducted on two separate dates. Group 1 was comprised of 11 special education teachers from three elementary schools (representing two school districts). Group 2 was comprised of 6 special education teachers from two additional elementary schools (representing two school districts). In order to describe the work of special educators in these schools, focus groups, weekly logs, and individual interviews were chosen as methods for collecting data.

When the transcription of the data from each focus group was completed, line-by-line coding was performed. Transcripts were coded using labels that describe teachers' verbal statements. After the first focus group session was coded, the researcher established emerging codes and commonalities in labeling.

Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously. The final product was shaped by the data collected as well as the analyses used during the process (Merriam, 1998). The following steps, suggested by Krueger (1994), were followed systematically in both data collection and analysis:

1.   Sequencing of questions to allow participants to become familiar with the process and topic.

2.   Capturing and handling data through the use of field notes and recording devices.

3.   Coding of data.

4.   Participant verification of key points made during focus group discussion before concluding the focus group session.

5.   Debriefing between moderator and assistant moderator to discuss emerging themes.

The second source of data was the weekly log collected from each participant approximately one week after their focus group session. Participants provided quantitative data describing the amount of time spent on daily activities in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring progress of their students, as well as qualitative descriptions through the notes included next to each activity describing any challenges they encountered, their feelings about the work they described doing, and general comments or concerns. Instructions on completing the log were provided orally and in written form at the time of the focus group interview; a from to be used in completing the log was also provided (see Appendix). Data were analyzed across logs and summarized by the three areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring progress.

3.1.2   Sampling and Sampling Plan

Data were collected from 17 certified special education teachers from five elementary schools in four school districts. Each had a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience because, according to Berliner (1986), experience is a necessary condition for developing perspective on the position of teaching. Teachers self-selected from these districts: Aliquippa, Burgettstown, Farrell, and Sto-Rox.

Collectively, the 17 SETs who participated instructed 178 students with IEPs. Students' most common primary diagnosis was a specific learning disability, followed by the categories of emotional disturbance, mental retardation, and speech impairments. Sixty percent of the students were boys. The majority of the students were members of an ethnic minority group, either African American or Bi-racial.

Participants were special education teachers representing varied contexts in terms of practice: grade levels taught, characteristics of students they teach, and characteristics of the schools in which they teach. The similar contexts or requirements to participate in this study included: teachers working with students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a specific learning disability and have worked as special education teachers in their current building for a minimum of three years.

3.1.3   Description of the Participants and the School Districts in this Study

These districts were selected from a pool of districts in Western Pennsylvania qualifying for Reading First funds. These districts were similar in demographics and size and self-selected to

participate in this study.   All data on the school districts were derived from www.greatschools.net, found on the world-wide-web and last updated in January 2006.

<u>School District A</u>

<u>School District A</u> is located 25 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, PA. Prior to 1984, the main source of employment and family income was steel production and jobs related to the steel industry. The decline of this business resulted in plunging family incomes, escalating crime, and a mass exodus of residents from the community. As a result of these factors, this district was declared a financially distressed community in 1988.

Over 32% of families have a household income under $15,000 and 15% are single parent homes. Only 75% of adults have a high school diploma. These factors have an impact on the ability of families to make education a priority. The elementary school has a student body in which over 85% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches, placing the poverty level more than 2.5 times the state's average of about 32 percent. The school has 543 students with a 75% minority population. The student to teacher ratio is 15:1. School A houses students in grades K-4. Their special education program is considered inclusive, with all students receiving special education services in the general education classroom.

School B, the Middle School, housed students in grades 5-8 with an enrollment of 411. 72% of the students were African-American and 87% of the school population was eligible for free or reduced lunch prices. The SETs who came from Building B in District A taught students with disabilities in grades 5-6. Their special education program was considered inclusive, with all students receiving services in the general education classrooms. SETs from this building

were included in this study because they taught the same aged students with LD as were housed in the elementary grades in the other districts.

Teacher A1. Teacher 1A had been teaching students with special needs since 1994. At the time of the focus group interview, she was teaching grades 1-4 in an Emotional Support (ES) classroom setting in Building A. She has been teaching in this school for 7 years. Her certification areas include mental retardation and physical/multiple disabilities, having received her Master's degree from Indiana University of PA. When asked to describe her role as a SET, she said her job was to stop inappropriate behaviors, labeling herself the "*watchdog*" of the students. She described her students as being more aggressive and physically active than those in previous years, and due to the many student fights, suspensions, and acts of violence, she is hoping to transfer out of ES next year

Teacher A2. Teacher A2 is a teacher of students with LD in grades 3-4 in building A. She has been a teacher of students with LD for 14 years. Her areas of certification include physical/multiple disabilities, with a Master's degree from Ohio State University. She described her role as that of the "*fixer*," the person the students look to fix their problems, whether the problem is a poor grade in a class, a problem with being bullied, or a problem at home. She talked about trying to "fix" some of the students' social/emotional needs by bringing food to give students something nutritious before leaving the building at 3:00 since many of her students will not have food for dinner at home. She said she was physically and emotionally tired from being in special education after almost 15 years.

Teacher A3. Teacher A3 had been teaching for 8 years, but only 3 years in building B teaching students in grades 5-6. She had been a general education teacher, teaching the fourth grade for 5 years before receiving her Masters degree from Indiana University of PA and

assuming a position in special education, serving students with LD. Teacher A3 described her role as the "*provider*" of academic supports to make sure her students passed all of their courses and hopefully, learned to read. She was responsible for creating (and thus providing) adapted materials for her students and general education teachers, finding materials for other special education teachers, and otherwise providing supports for both her special education and general education colleagues.

Teacher A4.   Teacher A4 had been teaching the longest with 28 years of experience in special education, having earned a Bachelors degree from Clarion University when it was called Clarion State College. She had been a teacher of students with LD in building A for 12 of those years. A vocal participant in the focus group session, Teacher A4 felt strongly that the recently implemented inclusionary practices in her school were leaving many students with special needs behind. Before she described her role, she asked if she was to talk about what she *really* did every day or what she *really wanted* to do everyday. This is how she described her daily activities: I fill in CBM charts; I chase down students and check their homework charts; I watch students behavior and fill in their behavior charts; I write in their logs to tell them what to do at home; and occasionally I get the chance to teach them something. She then laughed and said, "if you have to label me something, label me the '*completer*.'

Teacher A5.   Teacher A5 was another veteran teacher with 22 years of teaching in special education and 10 years of teaching experience in Building B. She was responsible for providing services to students in grades 5-6. She is also a life-long Pittsburgh native as were all of her peers in special education, receiving her Masters degree from Bloomsburg University. Teacher A5 has taken on the leadership role in ensuring that special educators in this building took part in this study. She often expressed her discomfort with the legislative and bureaucratic

systems affecting special education and was very verbal about her desire for her opinions and those of her peers to be included in this study. She described her role as the *"team leader"* of the SETs in her building. She was also the president of their Teachers Union and considered it to be her job to ensure that SETs were treated fairly and equitably. She was well versed in NCLB and other recent legislation and she kept on eye on policy changes that were impacting her work and the work of her colleagues.

Teacher A6. Teacher A6 was an African-American woman with only three years experience as a special education teacher, all three years in building B. She held a Bachelors degree from Slippery Rock University and was currently teaching students in Life Skills in grades 5-6. Teacher A6 was finding her way through the recent inclusion of all of the students in Life Skills into the general education classes, including Foreign Language, Algebra, and other courses that students in Life Skills had previously not participated in. She was not as vocal as her peers in the focus group interviews, and often attributed her quietness to what she perceived to be her lack of experience compared to her peers. When asked to describe her role, Teacher A6 said she could not define it with descriptive word. In fact, she said she really couldn't define it all because she did not sure of what role she was to play in the special education program in her building. Another member of this focus group then suggested she label her role as "*undeclared*."

<div align="center">School District B</div>

School district B is located west of Pittsburgh, PA. The K-6 elementary school had s student population of 785 students with 97% being white, compared to the state average of 76%. Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program was 34%, equivalent to the state average. Student to teacher ratio was 16:1. In 2005, 63% of their third graders scored at or above

proficient level on the PSSA, comparable to the state average of 68%. The student economic level of families in this school was above average with the median household income of $41,000.

Teacher B1. With 16 years of teaching experience in this elementary building, Teacher BI had a great deal to say about the special education program in her district. She earned a Masters degree in speech pathology from the University of Pittsburgh and was currently teaching students receiving special education services in grades 1-6. She defined her role as a "*team player*" who worked in conjunction with SETs and GETs to provide an appropriate education for all of the students in her building, those with and those without disabilities. Teacher B1 felt she had the support of the building administration to do whatever she needed to do for "her" students. This teacher was the only one of the 17 to display copies of her most recent DIBELS scores to share the progress of her students and to congratulate the others from her district for the increasing test scores.

Teacher B2. She had 16 years of experience, having been hired the same year as teacher B1. She currently taught grades K-6, students qualifying for services as students with Learning Support needs. Her Master's degree was from Duquesne University, and her Bachelors degree from Slippery Rock University. Teachers B1 and B2 were the most vocal participants in the focus group interviews and were instrumental in encouraging their peers to take part in this study. Teacher B2 defined her role as the "*instructional leader*" in her building, the person who keeps current with research-based best practice and shares pedagogy with her peers. This teacher viewed special education as a service becoming even more crucial in her school as the needs of her students become more complex and their literacy needs increase from K through grade 6.

Teacher B3. Teacher B3 was finishing her fifth year of teaching and the third year of teaching in this district. She was responsible for teaching grades K-2 Learning Support. Teacher B3 had yet to earn her Masters degree, having graduated from Clarion University. In both focus group sessions, the teachers with the fewest years of experience seemed to acquiesce to their peers with more years of teaching, particularly more years of teaching in their current building. Teacher B3 provided a lot of nonverbal indicators that she agreed wholeheartedly with her peers, but was more reticent to speak up than they were. She defined her role as a SET by saying she agreed with the descriptors provided by the other teachers from her building. After making that statement, she smiled and added, "you can call me the *follower*."

Teacher B4. Teacher B4 had been teaching for 10 of her 19 years in special education in this building. She was a graduate of Edinboro University earning her masters degree in Speech Therapy. She provided special education services to students with LD in grades 3-4. Teacher B4 provided mostly positive commentary on what was working for her as a special education teacher in her building, specifically the strong relationship she felt existed between the administration and special education faculty. This teacher described her role as a SET as "*chosen for her*" by God, and her role was to serve God by serving her students.

Teacher B5. Teacher B5 worked primarily with students in grades K-2 and primarily in the area of reading instruction. She was very positive about her role in providing instruction in reading content in the general education primary classrooms. In fact, teacher B5 was the only teacher in the entire study who felt equipped to teach reading and felt welcomed into the reading classrooms in her building. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a Masters degree in special education, she had worked as a special education teacher for 10 years. She defined her

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role as that of an "*assistant*" since she assisted the general education teachers in the delivery of instruction in reading.

School District C

School district C is located on the urban fringe of a large city. Its elementary school enrolled 603 students, 77% of whom received a free or reduced-price lunch. 60% of the students were white. The student to teacher ratio was 13:1. In 2005, 47% of third graders scored at or above the proficient level on the PSSA. School district C has experienced an economic decline since the demise of the steel industry and the community had a high rate of unemployment.

Teacher C1. Teacher C1 was completing her 19th year of special education teaching. She was teaching students in Learning Support in grades 2 and 3, having earned a bachelors degree from Clarion University in special education. This teacher viewed herself as a "*reading teacher*" because she spent the majority of her time instructing students in small groups in reading skill development. She said that trying to provide small group or individualized reading instruction for 90 minutes a day for 9-12 students was becoming an impossible task. She added that if she transfers out of special education after 19 years it will be because of the stress of trying to teach that many students with specific reading disabilities to read to grade level.

Teacher C2. Teacher C2 was the Emotional Support teacher in this building, providing services for students in grades K- 4. She received a Bachelors degree from Edinboro University in elementary education and certification in special education. She was completing her 8th year of teaching, all of those years spent in this district. Teacher C2 described herself as an "*advocate*" for students with social and emotional issues. She was very vocal about having to advocate for her students due to the amount of bullying they were subjected to in their peer

group. She viewed her role as the '*safekeeper*' for the emotional and social well-being of "her" students.

Teacher C3. Another dually certified teacher in both elementary and special education, Teacher C3 was the newest member of this special education team having graduated with a Bachelors degree from Slippery Rock University in 2000. All of her 6 years of experience were in this building, providing services to students with L/BD in grades 1-5. Teacher C3 expressed discomfort in her decision to take a job in special education right out of college, indicating that she was interested in applying for a general education position next year because of   all of the paperwork you have to do, and all the rules you have to follow even though they change all the time, and all the hassles of crossing your T's and dotting your I's. Sometimes I feel like a job in special education is trying to do the impossible.

Her colleague seated next to her laughed and said Teacher C3 talked of being a special education teacher like it was a "*mission impossible*."

School District D

School district D was a 103 year-old community positioned along the Pennsylvania/Ohio border. The community was formed around the steel industry, and, since the demise of the steel plants, had experienced economic decline. The elementary school has a student population of 593 with 80% black students and 82% of the students eligible for free or reduced-lunch. In 2005, 46% of their third graders scored at or above the proficient level; state average was 68%. The student to teacher ration was 12:1 and this building houses students in grades K-6.

Teacher D1.   District D had the least experienced teachers in special education, including Teacher D1 who was completing her fourth year of teaching students in Learning Support in grades 1-5. She recently graduated from Clarion University with a Masters degree in

special education and a Bachelors degree in elementary education. Just as the other teachers with less experience in the field, teacher D1 was open to providing whatever tasks she needed to provide in her building, but she was equally unsure as to the purpose of her work. She said she would define her role as "*undefined*" and that everyday she seemed to do something differently than the day before.

Teacher D2. Another dually certified teacher, D2 had been teaching in this building for 5 years, graduating from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a Master's degree in special education. She had spent all 5 years teaching students in Emotional Support in grades 1-5, and was very expressive of her feelings of burn out. She mentioned frequently that the students who qualified for ES were coming to her with more and more significant needs than she had been prepared to handle in her university work. She wanted to provide many suggestions for what universities could do to better prepare future teachers for the reality of this work, work that she labeled "*exhaustive and exhausting.*" Teacher D2 was newly married, and frequently mentioned that her husband was becoming more and more frustrated with her coming home tired and unhappy and "talking about my kids' lives all the time."

Teacher D3. Teacher D3 had eight years of teaching experience, all in this building as a teacher of students in Learning Support in grades 3-4. She was a Slippery Rock University graduate with a Master's degree in special education. Teacher D3 was equally expressive of her desire to move into a general education setting as soon as a position opened, citing many reasons for wanting to leave special education. She described her job as a SET with one word: "*crazy. It's a crazy job.*" Teacher D3 felt the role of a special education was a "noble" position and she wished she could do more to ensure the students in her building were receiving a good education, but she felt restrained by the nature of the job description

Table 1: Characteristics of the Participants

KEY: ES = Emotional Support Classroom   LS = Learning Support Classroom

TEACHER	RACE	NO. OF STUDENTS / GRADES / NO. OF GET'S EACH WORKS WITH	YEARS TAUGHT	SELF-DESCRIBED ROLE
A1	W	15 / 1-4 ES / 7 GET's	12	Watchdog
A2	W	9 / 3-4 LS / 6 GET's	14	Fixer
A3	W	11 / 5-6 LS / 6 GET's	8	Provider
A4	W	9 / K-4 LS / 4 GET's	28	Completer
A5	W	9 / 5-6 LS / 3 GET's	22	Team Leader
A6	B	9 / 5-6 LS / 4 GET's	3	Undeclared
B1	W	19 / 1-6 LS / 7 GET's	16	Team Player
B2	W	19 / K-6 LS / 8 GET's	16	Instructional Leader
B3	W	8 / K-2 LS / 4 GET's	5	Follower
B4	W	9 / 3-4 LS / 5 GET's	19	Chosen by God
B4	W	8 / K-2 LS /4 GET's	10	Assistant
C1	W	10 / 2-3 LS / 4 GET's	19	Reading Teacher
C2	W	13 / K-4 ES / 4 GET's	8	Advocate
C3	W	16 / 1-5 LS / 6 GET's	6	Mission Impossible
D1	W	20 / 1-5 LS / 7 GET's	4	Undefined
D2	W	12 / 1-5 ES / 4 GET's	5	Exhaustive
D3	W	11 / 3-4 LS / 4 GET's	8	Crazy Job

Table 1 summarizes characteristics of the participants. All 17 were women ranging in age from 25-51, the majority of whom were white, had earned a Master's degree in special education, and had been teaching a minimum of 3 years with an average of 12 years as a SET. Collectively they had a caseload of 178 students described as being of a minority race, eligible for free or reduced lunch, qualified for special education services in the category of LS or ES (with the exception of 5 students qualifying for Life Skills), and mostly males in grades K-6.

3.1.4   Data Sources, Collection and Preparation

The primary source of data collection was from the two focus group discussions of 11 and 6 special education teachers respectively. The secondary source was 17 daily logs kept for one week after each focus group session by each participant, with the third source of data being occasional follow-up interviews conducted by phone and from occasional email messages between the researcher and the participants whenever a need for clarification arose or further information from a specific participant was elicited.

3.1.5   Procedures

In January 2006 a pilot focus group session was held at Duquesne University; participants included three public school special education teachers and two faculty members who met for 1.5 hours to observe this primary researcher conduct a pilot focus group session. The IRB approval letter arrived on March 1, 2006. During the week of March 17, 2006, introductory

letters were sent to the principals of six elementary schools. The letter (Appendix 1) briefly described the focus of this study and asked principals to inform their special education teachers of this opportunity to participate.

By March 22, special education teachers from three of the five school districts had self-selected to be participants in this study. On March 30, the first focus group was held with 11 teachers representing school district A (buildings A and B) and school district B. This 1.5 hours focus group session was tape recorded by the primary researcher. An observer (a graduate student in special education from Duquesne University) took observational notes and helped the primary researcher record highlights of the discussion on large poster paper hung around the walls of the conference room.

On April 3, a fourth set of special education teachers agreed to participate in the study. On April 6, the second focus group was held with 6 teachers representing District C and D. This 1.5 hours focus group was tape recorded by the primary researcher and attended by a graduate student observer. The fifth school district did not respond to any requests to participate in this study.

Each participant was handed a folder upon their arrival with the demographic form to be completed on site (see Appendix 2), blank paper for note-taking, and a description of the log teachers had agreed to keep over the course of the next week. The facilitator and research assistant created a welcoming environment by greeting participants and offering refreshments, setting the tone for a relaxed and comfortable interview. Teachers began by filling out demographic information sheets, and then they participated in the focus group interview. Each group interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed. In addition, the research assistant took notes that included speaker changes, summaries of responses, and nonverbal emphases that were

incorporated into the transcripts for analysis. Teachers were notified that their responses would

be anonymous and that tapes would be destroyed after completion of the study.

The following questions were asked to guide the discussion:

1. How do you describe your role in your school?

2. What are your daily responsibilities?

3. How much time do you spend in planning, instructing, and monitoring the progress

of your students each day?

4. Describe any challenges you encounter in the areas of planning, instruction, and

monitoring of student progress on a daily basis?

5. What would you identify as causes of the challenges you encounter?

6. Describe the impact of these challenges on your daily work?

7. What recommendations do you have for addressing these challenges?

3.1.6   Data Collection and Analysis

Data from the focus group discussions was organized by common themes that emerged from the

two sessions. As suggested by Merriam (1998), these themes are explained on three levels.

First, a general description of each theme is provided, identifying patterns seen in the data. Next,

patterns of each theme are illustrated with supporting quotations from participants. Lastly,

information gathered from conversations between the primary researcher and graduate student at

the conclusion of each session are shared.

In addition, when conducting data analysis, consideration was given to the following

factors: consider the words, consider the context, consider the internal consistency, consider the

frequency of comments, consider the intensity of comments, consider the specificity of responses, and, find the big ideas (Merriam, 1998). Throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the study, the researcher and graduate student met on a regular basis to discuss anything that seemed particularly interesting, share summaries of the focus groups, compare notes and observations, search for patterns, discuss possible themes and interpretations, and continually engage in "explanation building" by looking for causal links (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Using the transcriptions from focus group interviews, the facilitator/researcher conducted examinations of the data set and generated and defined initial categories for analysis. Categories are small units of the transcript that relate to one concept (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, the category labeled manageability of workload/paperwork was supported by the following representative statement:

> The IEP formats change so frequently and our special education supervisor
>
> doesn't tell us of changes, so we are always stressing filling out the right form at
>
> the right time. It is a never-ending process of catch up and fall behind (Teacher
>
> C1).

The next step was to group categories that were related. Data were organized into themes (for example, the element of time), sub-themes (tasks to complete in a school day for example), and categories (the smallest delineation of a response that pertained to an individual idea: for example, "I can't do everything I want to do" or " I have too many forms to fill out after every lesson.") A category that presented a unique idea and therefore, could not be grouped with other categories became a sub-theme. This recursive process provided an organizational framework for finding larger meaning from the individual units of data.

In seeking relationships between and among categories, a constant comparative method of analysis was used, with categories continually reorganized and refined and new categories created when teacher responses failed to fit an existing category. Care was given to insure that the data consistently corresponded to the chosen category (internal homogeneity) and was clearly different from other categories (external heterogeneity) (Patton, 1990). Finally, when a mutually exclusive list of categories was developed, a re-analysis of the teacher response tables was conducted to reflect the common categories.

Once data from the focus group sessions were coded, an analysis of the 17 weekly logs was performed in the same collection procedure. In order to confirm the analysis, teacher responses were triangulated. This was done by checking categories that emerged from teachers' written responses in their logs against those generated during oral focus group interviews to refute or support findings. While not all issues were repeated in both oral and written responses, this procedure provided additional information about actual practices implemented in the classrooms. The cross-case analysis that emerged presented a collective view of 17 special education teachers' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and challenges.

3.1.7 Example of Coding Procedure

The general categories of coding included: (a) planning, (b) instruction, (c) progress monitoring, (d) challenges, (e) roles and responsibilities. The following comments were coded as follows:

1. Planning-statements made during focus group discussions and/or logs that described preparing materials, lesson plans, sequencing of lessons, deciding on objectives for lesson, etc., either alone (SET only) or in conjunction with general education teacher (SET/GET).

2. Instruction-statements made during focus group discussions and/or logs that described face-to-face interactions between student and teacher, activities in a teaching capacity done in self-contained classrooms or inclusive classrooms, activities considered to be co-teaching, and any tutoring services performed during the school day for one or more students with or without disabilities.

3. Monitoring progress-statements made during focus group discussions and/or logs that described intermittent or consistent use of probes, daily feedback, establishing baseline, and other data collection activities performed during the school day.

<div align="center">

Code = P for planning

I for instruction

MP for monitoring progress

</div>

4   RESULTS

4.1   SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND THEIR TIME

Each of the 17 teachers who participated in the focus group discussions agreed to complete a time log of activities for one week (Monday-Friday) beginning immediately after their focus group session. Each teacher completed the Time Log Form (See Appendix) and to which each added narrative comments. Eleven of the logs were completed for the week of April 3-7 and the remaining for the week of April 17-21 (due to Spring Break school schedules, this was the first full week after their focus group session.) Logs averaged 12 pages each, ranging from 5-20 pages in length. The logs described each SETs daily activities in the areas of planning, instruction, and monitoring of student progress. A summary of the logs is presented in Table 2.

The types of activities that fit into each area (planning, instructing, or monitoring progress) were described in detail during the focus group session and on written instructions the SETs took home. *Planning* was to include any activity, either with a colleague or individually, whose purpose was to 'get ready' to do any other activity. In this context, common planning was time spent with a colleague preparing future lessons in the general education classroom or preparing for upcoming events that involved all of the students, and instructional planning was defined as time spent preparing for individual students with LD. *Instructing* was defined as time spent with at least one student actively involved in the teaching process. *Monitoring* progress

was defined as time spent either working with a student collecting data on his/her performance or in completing progress monitoring forms and charts after data were collected. Teachers reported an average school day of 7 hours 30 minutes, from the time they were required to report in the morning to the end of their school day.

Table 2. Summary of Time Spent per Day in Specified Activities

Activity	Hours per Day Reported on Teacher Logs (n=17) Average Minutes (% of day)	
	Mean	Range
Planning	40 minutes (9%)	20 minutes - 60 minutes
Common Planning	12 minutes	5 minutes - 20 minutes
Instructional Planning	28 minutes	15 minutes - 40 minutes
Instruction		3 hours - 4 hours 30 minutes
In General Ed Class	3 hours 50 minutes (51%)	(78% of instructional time)
In Resource Class	3 hours 50 minutes	(22% of instructional time)
Monitoring Student Progress	1 hour (13%)	50 minutes - 1 hour 15 minutes
Miscellaneous Other/ Paperwork	2 hours (27%)	1 hour 30 minutes - 2 hours 30 minutes

4.1.1 Planning

SET's described two kinds of planning activities: common planning time between at least one GET and the SET for activities specific to the general education classroom, and instructional planning, where the SET was planning alone or with her aide for activities specific to the resource room setting. *Common* planning was often done "on the run." For example, Teacher B1 described a Monday morning "planning" encounter with one of her general education teachers with whom she co-teaches. Arrived at 8:10. Nadine (GET) was turning her lesson plans into the main office and handed me my copy of her plans when she saw me. We talked for maybe 5 minutes about the writing assignments due from the fourth graders, the chapter math test being given on Thursday, and the progress of a student who had been absent all last week towards completing assignments (Teacher B1). Other teachers describe similar "planning" routines.Got here at 7:50 and found Laura making coffee in the lounge. We started talking about the week, and then three other GETs came in for coffee. We tend to meet like this on Monday mornings. It is informal, but it's useful time to catch up on plans. I stayed until 8:15 when we report to our classrooms, so that's about 20 minutes of time we spent talking about planning (Teacher B2).

A look at the daily schedules of the 17 SETs indicated much more time available for common planning than the teachers reported using in their weekly logs and conversations during the focus group sessions. For example, SETs were contracted to arrive at their buildings 30 minutes prior to the arrival time of their students. According to their administration, this daily 30-minute block of time was assigned as "common planning time," or non-instructional time set aside for the purpose of providing one block of time where all of the teachers could meet

together or in grade level teams, etc. When asked to describe what happens with this common planning time, many SETs reported using this time for parent conferences, IEP meetings, meetings scheduled by the principal with mandatory attendance, or participating in other meetings that thwarted their opportunities for common planning.

During discussions on planning, several patterns emerged among focus groups. First, both groups stressed the importance of planning in the teaching process, but each group also stressed that common planning between general and special educators is not occurring. The groups reported that general education teachers do not communicate with them about instructional planning. They explained that for the majority of them, copies of the general educators lesson plans are typically provided to the special educator at the beginning of the week, usually in their mailboxes. Group members noted that there is typically no discussion about lesson plans as they exchange hands from general to special educators.

Time spent in common planning as described in their weekly logs indicate an average of a 2 minute exchange between GET and SET in their shared classes, equaling about 12 minutes a day with 5-6 GETs; another 15 minutes a day spent in instructional planning with their instructional assistant or aide; leaving only about 13 minutes for them for instructional planning for individual students.

Common planning routines looked somewhat different for SETs in Building B of District A. Building B, the Middle School, housed students in grades 5-8, although the three SETs who participated in this study were teachers of students with disabilities in grades 5-6 to maintain consistency with SETs from the other districts. In District A, Building B, special education teachers were included in weekly grade-level 'block planning' periods of common planning time of 30 minutes a week.

Not all of the common planning time activities were collaborative in nature. For example:

I know this sounds like a lot of whining, and I know we are really fortunate to have this scheduled time to meet collaboratively, but I wish an end result of meeting together regularly would be some real collaborative work. Like today- fifth grade common planning block. The third grade teachers planned out all the content area classes for the week (example: pages 66-71 math, standard 2.5.3. I'm just sitting there thinking about what I might do to gear these lessons on problem solving geared more to the needs of my kids (who qualified for Life Skills services) because they will be sitting in those classrooms all week. (Teacher A6)

And yet, for others, having this common planning time was perceived as time well spent. Teacher A5, in the same building as Teacher A6, described a very different experience:

The sixth grade team met today in our common planning block to plan for the big Constitution unit in social studies. The students have a great deal of group work assignments over the course of this unit, with a cumulating research paper due that is historically very difficult for many of the kiddos, and particularly difficult for the ES and LD students. Just the group work alone is challenging, and then the research paper puts them into orbit. So, I was instrumental in developing the groups and in assigning the group roles (we use cooperative learning) and got myself scheduled to be in the class all week to be an extra set of hands. I could tell the other teachers were really appreciative of my ideas. (Teacher A5).

Before ending this entry in her log, Teacher A5 wrote a note intended for the primary researcher's consideration. It said, " I know (Teacher A6) has bad experiences in her 5th grade

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common planning block, but I've learned to be more aggressive in getting my ideas out to the group. You have to be pretty vocal in these settings to be heard. She's still too quiet."

While Teacher A5 described her role in common planning as being "pretty vocal," a teacher from District B described her role in common planning as being "pretty visible."

> Teacher B5: I have learned to just 'be present' as much as I can when the other teachers have planning time. For instance, I know certain teachers always eat together and spend some of their lunch-time planning for upcoming events. So, I'll go on over and sit with them when I hear these conversations beginning and then I can stick my two cents in. This seems to go over pretty well with them, and it makes me happy to have a chance to plan with them.

Teacher A4 does not seem to have the same luck. Describing herself as a "seeker," she recorded this entry on a Thursday:

> Thursdays are so tough for me. All the content tests (math, spelling, English) fall on Fridays, meaning that the third grade teachers have made copies of the exams by Thursday afternoon. I'm always spending Thursdays seeking face-to-face time with them to find out what information is on the tests so I can make quick study guides to send home with my kids. I'll run to one teacher's room and ask, "What do we need to know?" and she'll answer on the fly. Then I find another teacher in the copy room and ask the same thing…I'm usually chasing the students out the door as they get on their buses, handing them these study guides I made. For these 3rd grade teachers, this is as close to common planning as I can get.

There were more similarities than differences among SETs reports of their *instructional* planning. Every SET was provided at least one block of time reserved during the day for tasks

specific to instructional planning, with blocks ranging from 20-45 minutes a day, although with the same caveat as described whenever a block of time was reserved (in theory) for planning:

> I spent my instructional planning time today talking to the principal, other teachers and two of my kids who were involved in some pretty wild behaviors in the cafeteria. My planning period follows their lunch period, and I was called to the cafeteria to escort the kids to the office and try to make sense of what had happened and then writing up the incident on their behavior charts (Teacher D2).

4.1.2   Time Spent in Instructing Students with LD

Teachers reported spending about half of each school day teaching. Descriptions of how this time was spent had one common thread among all participants: not enough time for individualized instructional activities and too much time spent observing and aiding students in the general education classrooms without direct contact with the students with LD. Time tallied from the weekly logs detailed how much instructional time was spent assisting in the general education classroom without opportunities to provide any individualized instruction. As Teacher A5 described in her weekly log for Tuesday:

> Reported to Mrs. X for her 40-minute math period with the sixth graders. I have a good sense of what she is teaching because every teacher follows the manual in the same order. I stay on my feet in the back of the room while she does the intro and examples on the board in the front of the room. When it's time for students to work independently at their desks, I walk around and assist anyone who needs it, but I focus my attention on the 3 students in there who are LD. I work quietly with each one for as long as I can before

moving on. I don't feel like I am really instructing, it's more of a tutoring experience, but this time counts for the time I am instructing students. I'll spend more time later in the day reminding them about their math homework assignment than I did in one-on-one math teaching today.

Similar examples were provided that elaborate on their concern of how little time they spent in providing direct, individualized, intensive instruction, the kind they were trained to provide, and the kind of assisting/tutoring instruction they find themselves providing instead.

Thursday: Mrs. Y was losing 10 of her students today to practicing with the choral teacher for the Spring Concert. That left 9 students in the room for math instruction. She decided to have a review of yesterdays lesson instead of introducing something new, so I asked her if I could take 4 students in a small group and do some math checks to get a quick look at their levels of understanding before spending the rest of the time on the review lesson. That way I was able to get some progress monitoring data on my 4 students and do some individualized remedial work with them. I considered this to be a good instructional day. (Teacher A2)

The findings from the daily logs indicate that SETs are more often in the role of assisting general education teachers in the instruction of the whole class, with no or little time specifically dedicated to working intensively with students with LD. Quantitative data accumulated on time spent instructing found 78% of the 3 hours and 50 minutes spent in tasks on instruction took place in the general education classrooms, and 22% of their instructional time spent in the resource setting. SETs describe their role as "assisting the general education teacher" while in the general classes and their role with students in the resource setting as "tutoring or helping with homework." While this is not a new finding in research (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002;

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Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1994; Klinger & Vaughn, 2002) it corroborates findings indicating SETs are not providing the kind of instruction they want to provide and are trained to provide.

Teachers from three of the four districts provided numerous accounts of the detrimental effect of general educators use of and reliance on basal series and teacher's manuals on their opportunities to provide effective instructional practices in special education. For example, Teacher B1 said the root of challenges in providing instruction lie in the lack of opportunities to individualize instruction based on student need, since all of the teachers in grades 1-3 use prescribed lesson plans written in the texts and requiring (or allowing) no individualization. "They all get the same thing instructionally."

More than one SET talked at length about acting as an assistant for the GET instead of being viewed as an equal partner in the delivery of instruction. Teacher C3 articulated it this way:

> I am upset because I was trained to do diagnostic-prescriptive teaching with students with LD. I know how to scaffold their lessons to begin on their level and then progress on what they already know. It's painful to watch Donna (a GET) begin a lesson with them (her students) already lost and then proceed for 45 minutes without ever checking for their level of understanding. There is no way to make up for that loss of instructional time.

4.2   FINDINGS ON PROGRESS MONITORING

Teacher C3 described using some of her instructional time to do academic probes, or checks, on a students' understanding of a concept. After completing the probes, she recorded the data on progress monitoring sheets she had developed for this purpose. Her concluding comment was, "I considered this to be a good instructional day." Many of the other SETs included upwards of 5 minutes or more of monitoring student progress as part of their time spent in instruction. Indeed, it seemed that allowing 5 minutes 'at the end' of a lesson to complete a progress monitoring form was a major factor contributing to the one hour, or 13% of their time, calculated from their logs.

Finding that the SETs averaged just over one hour a day in performing progress monitoring probes and recording data explained their earlier expressions of frustrations of 'not having enough time' allocated for teaching behaviors, compounded by some teachers reporting they do not use the results of all this monitoring of student progress to make instructional decisions. In those instances, it is easier to understand why some SETs would refer to monitoring of student progress as "taking too much time away from teaching and putting too many paperwork demands on us." (Teacher A4)

All of the special educators in this study discussed the importance of monitoring the progress of students with LD to assess individual instructional needs, assess IEP goal attainment, and to plan for student annual reviews. SETs in District B also described how through daily monitoring their students were as aware of their progress as their teachers were, more than one teacher recognized that in the age of accountability, progress monitoring warrants the amount of time special educators devote to its daily completion.

However, data from the weekly logs highlighted the amount of time spent on this task and described frustrations with being excluded from professional development activities addressing

best practices in the monitoring of student progress. Fourteen of the seventeen SETs had created their own system of recording data from academic probing sessions with their students, most having met with fellow SETs in their building to work together to devise the system they currently use. Only three of the SETs used the same method of recording data as their GET colleagues, and those three were all from District C, where the principal was instrumental in providing SETs opportunities to attend training sessions.

4.3   TIME SPENT ON MISCELLANEOUS OTHER AND PAPERWORK

The analysis of the SETs logs and comments from focus group sessions validated their perception of an excessive amount of paperwork, with 27% of their day devoted to this task. If completing the CBM forms they described completing in the area of monitoring student progress were added to the percent of time spent in paperwork daily, a total of 40% was found. This finding validated Teacher B4 and others who said, "This is not the job I thought I would be doing." For people who enter the profession of teaching, these tasks are not what they would say *should* define their role (being a "completer" like Teacher A4) yet the reality is that 40% of their day is time spent completing, generating, and complying with paperwork. When the SETs pass many of the paperwork requirements onto their instructional aides (if they have one), the SET is left feeling guilty that they did not do it themselves. When the SET spends her time engrossed in paperwork and leaves instructional responsibilities to her aide, she feels guilty about not teaching her students herself. In both cases, the challenge of paperwork impacts the SETs feelings of efficacy, and adds to the frustrations that create role dissonance.

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Not all of the 27% of time allocated for Misc. Other and Paperwork was defined as paperwork completion. Tasks such as lunch duty, recess duty, calling parents on the phone, meetings with parents, administrators, and colleagues, clerical work such as making copies, bulletin boards, making adapted materials for classroom use, including study guides, and filling in individual student behavior plans and Friday folders were included in this category.

A significant finding, and another validating finding the perceptions of the SETs was the significant amount of time they spent dealing with student behavior issues. While the SETs did not tally minutes spent handling student discipline and behaviors separately in their logs, they did talk about the amount of time student behaviors affected their work day, and they did tell the stories of time taken from instruction, from planning, and from paperwork duties to handle crisis situations with students. Aggregating time spent on behavior management into the category of Misc. Other and Paperwork contributed greatly to this total of 27%, although it is not possible to conclude a definitive percentage of time spent directly with behavior management.

<u>Summary of Weekly Logs</u>

Teachers reported spending 9% of their days in planning for instruction and 51% in "teaching" students, although little of that time was actually spent providing individualized instruction. Tasks of recording CBM data, completing paperwork, miscellaneous clerical tasks and dealing with student behavior equaled 40% of a SETs day.

4.4   FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

Tyack and Cuban (1995) say that a strategy of educational reform should include what motivates and disheartens teachers, and one place to start educational reform is to ask teachers what bothers

them. In focus group interviews, the teachers in this study described 5 challenges that were a reflection, at least in part, of the evolution of their job responsibilities and the perceived inadequacy of the current job design for meeting the challenges presented. Time and time again SETs reported feeling that they were not able to conduct their work the way that they believed they were trained and hired to do it. In most cases, the issues for these teachers were either their own levels of preparation for the specific tasks that made up their jobs, or the mechanisms and the designs through which they had to work.

The importance of understanding the challenges, their perceived causes, impacts, and suggested solutions is reinforced by Bateman (1994), who said that special educators fail to learn from the past, because we fail to teach the past or perhaps sometimes, being taught, choose to ignore the lessons. A discipline that has no sense of its own past not only repeats its mistakes, but also spins in place. The results of this study corroborate as well as add to the findings of research studies discussed in the literature review.

4.4.1   Challenge 1: Absence of Teamwork Among General & Special Education Teachers

One of the two most commonly discussed challenges for these teachers was creating an environment of teamwork between themselves and their peers in general education. "Lack of teamwork" was mentioned 23 times in the transcripts of the two focus groups. Lack of teamwork was sometimes associated with conflicts over student placement. Teacher D2 and others described general education teachers who believed that the role of special educators was to remove lower functioning students from general education classes and to assume full responsibility for these students' instructional needs.

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I was told in a planning meeting very early into the school year that my job was to get the low kids' out of the general education classroom. If I can't get them out, I can at least keep them quiet while in the classroom so others can learn. We don't work together to teach the whole class, we work together to control the make-up of the class (Teacher D2).

For other teachers, lack of teamwork was associated with differences in the pedagogical approach to classroom instruction. The SETs in this study were aware of the need to be providing differentiated instruction; in fact, the term "differentiated instruction" appeared 36 times in the transcripts from the focus groups. However, the SETs were frustrated by the GETs apparent belief that differentiated instruction was an instructional approach that only special educators were supposed to implement.

I know my general education teachers have had training in how to provide dfferentiated instruction, but for some of them, differentiated instruction still means they teach the typical kids and I teach the kids with special needs, and tat's what makes their classroom differentiated" (Teacher C2).

Still others illustrated the lack of teamwork by describing who dealt with classroom behavior problems. According to the SETs, many GETs have little tolerance for students whose behavior was bothersome or disruptive or otherwise negatively impacting the classroom environment. This sub-theme of escalating behaviors was mentioned 51 times in the transcripts, with 40 of those mentions of behavior tied directly to a sentence concerning the effects of testing periods on student behaviors. The following quote from Teacher C1 was echoed by 5 others in the focus group:

When PSSA testing time comes around, these teachers are scrambling to get the lowest performing kids all the extra help they can to try to improve their scores. This means they all want me to tutor one-on-one and teach components of the test in pull-out sessions. The kids in special education become so overworked and stressed out that their behaviors escalate and I have a daily battle, at least one battle, every day during PSSA testing. It's just crazy (Teacher C1).

Fourteen SET's reported feeling underappreciated by the GETs in their building, using phrases like "lack of respect" and "misjudging my abilities" when providing examples of why they do not work in teams with their general education colleagues. For example, Teacher A3 said:

I am perceived as the one who works with the retarded kids, not the "normal" ones, so my general education teachers don't trust my abilities to teach "their" kids, even though I have a lot of training in methods of teaching reading. In three years in this building, I have never been allowed to team teach a lesson in general education. And I am constantly asking or offering to help them. I don't feel like I'm using any of my skills in this job.

The three SETs who felt the least distanced in their relationships with GETs were from District C. Teacher C1 describes this scene:

Our principal was very vocal in her charge to all of us this year; to get our DIBELS scores up and to increase our data collection processes to be able to show the growth patterns of our students, including the students with LD. With that remark, she pretty much single-handedly got me into the general education grades 1 and 2 classrooms

to team-teach reading. It was more of an "all hands on deck" mandate that created the chance for me to get in there and teach like I wanted to do for years.

District C had just experienced a turn-over in their administrative positions, including this newly hired principal who had been on the job six months when these teachers met in the focus group session, so their stories describing positive encounters and relationships with their GETs were unlike stories they would have told in previous years. Teachers from Districts A and B were more vocal in their long standing feelings of an absence of teamwork and lack of respect among GETs in their buildings. District D, the district with the newest SETs, expressed a surprising lack of teamwork among GETs in their building. They were the most vocal of feeling disillusionment; that the courses they completed towards their certification led them to believe they would be expected to do much more collaborative planning and teaching than they found the opportunity to do.

While 7 of the 17 SETs felt they were prepared to teach reading in the general education classroom and were not always afforded the opportunities, the other 10 SETs cited their lack of preparation to teach reading as a reason for the non-existent opportunities to develop collaborative teaming.

Some of the general education teachers are right about my abilities to teach in their classrooms. I had maybe two courses in teaching reading; one at the undergraduate level and one at the graduate level, and neither prepared me to adequately teach a second grade reading class. Even now, since I'm not included in the training sessions on effective reading practices, I don't think I would teach a second grade reading class with any confidence. (Teacher A2).

A continuing issue identified by the participants as impeding a collaborative climate is the lack of adequate materials. Teacher B3 described how special education teachers are "not counted" in with the ordering of materials by general education teachers, in fact, SET's in this study clearly stated that they have no separate purchasing power. Therefore, the special education teachers in District B borrow texts and materials from whomever and wherever they can. This contributes to what District B teachers describe as "isolated from the curriculum, isolated from materials, and isolated from decision making opportunities."

A teacher from District B said that general education teachers do not defend expenses of special education teachers in their budgets, creating a have-versus-the-have-nots climate in the building.

I am always the one begging for materials. I am reminded on a daily basis that my students don't matter as much as the others do because of the way I have to plead for the things I need to teach them with (B2).

Phrases provided by the teachers to describe the challenge of lack of teamwork were identified as: lack of adequate special education teacher preparation, inadequate materials/resources; differences in general educators and special educators paradigms; the culture of teacher segregation; and the negative view of special education held by general education teachers and other stakeholder who do not share a common vision of the delivery of special education services for students with disabilities.

4.4.2 Challenge 2: Changes in the Population of Students Assigned to Special Education

Every one of the 17 special education teachers in this study talked about the changing population of students being identified for special education services in grades K-5 in their elementary

schools. About 80% of the 17 Sets used the term "garden variety student with learning disabilities" to describe the student who used to make up their caseload but no longer did. The SETs claimed that such students were not readily identified for special education anymore, but, instead, "moved from list to list," remaining in the general education population, and scoring poorly on every testing instrument. Taking their place are increasing numbers of students whose behaviors are the main reason for their underachievement. These students are now assigned the label "learning disability" instead of "emotionally disturbed" or "behavior disordered" and even after the diagnosis are fully included in general education. These students remained in the general education population until a record of their behaviors was deemed "aggressive enough "(Teacher A3) to change their LRE to a special education classroom. All of the SETs in this study identified an increase in the numbers of students requiring positive behavior plans, functional behavior assessments, crisis intervention plans and other supports for inappropriate behaviors. These are what take up the SETs' time.

> There are so many students in that reading class that need more intensive instruction that I can't get to because I'm dealing with behavior control instead. Every five minutes I'm passing out reward cards or taking them away or writing in a kid's record book or sending one to time out or changing the stoplight from green to yellow to red…and in the meantime all these kids that need supported in instruction aren't getting enough" (Teacher B5).

Given the increasing numbers of students whose behaviors significantly impact their ability to learn, it was not surprising to hear SETs describe students as frustrated test-takers who become increasingly frustrated in a test-fail-test cycle so common in today's schools. They described their students as upset about being in a curriculum that was not taught on their

instructional level and about having to take so many tests that only measure their lack of progress in grade level skills that are too difficult for them.   The product of this frustration is disruptive and aggressive behaviors, diminished motivation and even less student progress over time, and differences in opinions concerning issues of student placement in the LRE.

When the teachers spoke of their frustration over the poor performance of their students on standardized tests, they described how this frustration affects their *personal* satisfaction with their roles. The majority of these special education teachers equate being an effective teacher with the outcome of student success.

> Every single day I go home wondering if anybody really learned anything today. I want my students to love school, to smile and feel good about what they can do. They don't meet up with much success on a daily basis, and I understand it when they say they hate school." (Teacher D2).

One of the focus group questions asked SETs to explain what motivated them to become special education teachers. The responses shared a number of similar characteristics. These teachers saw themselves as caregivers, as people who wanted to be in a service profession, as people who wanted to "give back and contribute to their communities" (exact wording of six teachers). When these dispositions were not supported through the realities of their profession, these teachers become disillusioned with their power to create positive change and to be effective educators. Their disillusionment was compounded by experiencing their students' frustrations and then, ultimately, their feelings of a loss of empowerment to create changes for their students.

4.4.3   Challenge 3: Increasing Workload and Paperwork.

We arrive first and we leave last. (Teacher B3).

SETs had a lot to say about the amount and type of paperwork responsibilities they have.

Make sure you include paperwork when you write your paper about what's challenging for special education teachers. Paperwork! If I leave this job next year (after 19 years) it's because I can't teach kids anymore. I'm too busy doing the paperwork. Changing the IEP requirements, increasing the progress monitoring requirements, sending home Friday folders….all I do is shuffle paper. My district doesn't keep us informed about changes in the system until they are reacting in a crisis mode because we aren't doing it right. I never feel like I'm really doing it right (Teacher D1).

Are you doing a tally count of how many times a particular word appears in your transcripts? If you are (she turns to the others in the focus group session), make sure we all say 'paperwork' a million times, ok? (Question by Teacher A4).

Paperwork has long been recognized as a trouble spot in special education, and demands may be increasing. Although IDEA 97 included efforts on the federal level to reduce the volume of paperwork, the teachers in this study indicated that those efforts had not been very effective. Too often the team concept, mandatory in the evaluation, program, and placement function of IDEA was translated in practice as the special education teacher assuming all the logistical and paperwork duties for the team. Sixteen of the 17 focus group participants said they take at *least* one hour of paperwork home with them nightly, and 14 of those 16 said that even after spending that hour at home they felt "behind" in their paperwork requirements. Eight of the SETs described their desk as covered with unfinished charts and incomplete folders.

Many of the teachers in this study had not received any training to complete regular progress monitoring assessment on their students to collect information that could guide their instructional planning. When describing this, Teacher B1 said, "I know it is important to know where students are performing by evaluating progress through assessments, but I don't know how to do it well." Most found the burden of data collection to be overwhelming. Thirteen of the teachers identified the daily progress monitoring paperwork as unmanageable. As Teacher B4 explained it, "I understand why progress monitoring is so important, and I like having the information on my students'

5   DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the roles and responsibilities of 17 special education teachers and the challenges they encountered in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring of student progress of elementary students in 4 school districts in Western Pennsylvania. This study was conducted by collecting data through focus group discussions, written weekly logs, and personal interviews. Focus group questions regarding the teaching practices of special educators were guided by the review of the literature and the conceptual framework of this study, based in part on Duke's 1987 vision of teaching excellence in the areas of planning, instructing, and monitoring student progress. Although the data gathered from focus group discussions was categorized into these three areas, varying emphasis placed on each one indicated an unequal importance to the SETs. This chapter discusses the findings of this study.

One of the major findings uncovered in this study was that the desired or anticipated roles- the expectations of the responsibilities of SETs were *not* changing in response to the demands of a rapidly changing profession. SETs, for the most part, were continuing to attempt to provide services in inclusive settings that no longer supported the kinds of individualized special education services they had been trained to provide. The challenges described in the literature from 1990-1996 were the *same* challenges repeated a decade later, as evidenced by the York-Barr et al. study of 2005. Special education teachers face expectations of greater collaboration

than ever before, greater demands for content knowledge, and greater accountability for students' learning in the general education classroom. A reasonable response to this would be to provide intense, ongoing personnel preparation, both pre-service and professional development opportunities for practicing teachers, and for both GETs and SETs. Teachers report, however, that little is being done to address these needs. In fact, SETs reported continuing battles to be recognized in professional development opportunities, and the less experienced teachers, having recently graduated from institutions of higher education, reported little in their pre-service training prepared them for the jobs they encountered as special education teachers.

Teachers cannot do their best work without the appropriate tools. SETs in this study reported that they often lacked monies to purchase materials for students with disabilities. The need for high-quality, content-focused, research-supported materials for teaching students with disabilities is critical if students are going to master curriculum. SETs reported that while they are included in the budgets to order materials with their general education peers, they have no separate line items to order materials specific to the needs of their students with LD. Teachers from three of the four districts were not included in the teacher count for ordering texts used in the curriculum, so if there were four teachers in the second grade section, only enough materials for four sections were ordered, leaving the SET without a set of materials, a teachers manual and supplementary materials to use when planning or instructing.

While system-wide expectations of administration, parents, and GETs of what the roles of SETs are have changed in the last decade, little is being done to prepare or support teachers to meet these demands. Paperwork demands continue to be overwhelming for SETs, yet they report being last on the list to receive the technology or clerical support needed. The range and intensity of students' special education needs have increased, yet little had been done to

systematically support teachers in meeting these needs. The systems in these school districts have not responded to the voices of special education teachers past or present.

5.1   FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Many SETs concurred with Morvant and Gersten (1995) who said that the ways in which special education teachers' work was structured, both in terms of human resources and the balances struck between time allotted and actual work demands, were inadequate for meeting the challenges of their workload. Stresses due to job design emerged as critical factors in a teachers' desire to stay in the field or transfer into general education and included: conflicting expectations, goals, and directives; the severity of students' needs; student behavior issues; lack of building level support; lack of professional development opportunities; and bureaucratic requirements, regulations and paperwork.

A perceived lack of building level support and lack of on-the-job learning options exacerbates role dissonance. The findings from this study indicate that, for SETs, teacher classroom autonomy and teacher involvement in decision-making were related to their level of job satisfaction. As districts think about teacher retention, a focus on understanding job design and finding a means for reducing stress due to job design is critical, especially in light of the fact that many special educators continue to transfer to general education positions or leave the teaching profession within the first five years of employment. Boyer and Mainzer (2003) said, "We bring people in, burn them out early, then bemoan the fact that we have this high turnover rate" (p. 10).

For the 17 SETs in this study, stresses due to poor job design were found in the discrepancy between what they believe about their jobs (that they are there to teach students with disabilities) and the realities of their jobs (burdensome paperwork loads, limited opportunities to provide individualized instruction, and a non-collaborative work environment). Relate here to York-Barr 2005 findings.

5.2   FINDINGS IN THE AREA OF PLANNING

The term 'differentiated instruction" was mentioned 36 times in the focus group discussions. General education teachers feel that differentiated instruction is what you do "when you have kids in special education in the classroom." According to these SETs, the practice of offering differentiated instruction for ALL learners does not seem to be occurring. SETs reported that general education teachers perceived differentiated instruction as a special education technique, (i.e., if a student requires something "different" they should be in the special education classroom to 'get it.') These findings are in agreement with Vaughn and Schumm, (1994); and Shumm et al., (1995), and suggest that GETs do not preplan for students with LD. This study confirmed this finding, but also revealed that not only were SETs not participating in the planning of instruction in inclusive classrooms, they were often not aware of what activities would be taking place until they physically stepped foot in the classroom. Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (2002) wrote that without co-planning, co-teaching often becomes a special educator helping a general educator. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) discovered incongruence between the perceived roles of SETs in co-taught settings and their actions, finding that little teaching was done by SETs. The teachers in this study confirmed this role: SETs assist the general education

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teacher in facilitating lessons they have not developed jointly nor have planned to teach jointly. Not one the SETs in this study provided instruction using a co-teaching model.

5.3   FINDINGS IN THE AREA OF PROVIDING DAILY INSTRUCTION

General educators, for the most part as described in this study, use whole group instruction methods, and because whole group instruction does not always meet the specific needs of students with LD, special educators in this study described providing specialized instruction to those students in a resource class environment whenever time allowed. However, instead of this time being used to provide specialized support, this instructional time was used predominately for students to catch up on assignments or receive a 10-minute review lesson before beginning their independent homework assignments. Little specialized instruction is taking place, and although SETs discussed teaching and learning strategies they found useful for students with LD, the focus of conversation when discussing instruction was on providing accommodations. Providing accommodations seemed to be what most GETs in this study saw as a means for providing individualized instruction.

Duke (1987) emphasized that as part of instruction, teachers should possess a repertoire of instructional strategies to address the needs of all students. He also emphasized that although introducing new content material is an important component of instruction, reviewing and re-teaching content are also essential. The teachers in this study reported that little time was used for reviewing and re-teaching material within the inclusive setting. Vaughn et al. (2000) demonstrated that students with LD need specific instruction and support in basic skills, as well

as ample opportunities to practice strategies and receive quality feedback if their use of strategies is to be successful. The opportunities for SETs to teach learning strategies to students with LD were limited to nonexistent.

Crockett (2001) noted that the earliest movements driving the development of special education legislation arose from the failure of the general education system to respond to the instructional needs of learners with disabilities. In his view, little has changed since then; general education is focused on the provision of group teaching and learning, with political concerns for costs and accountability. In contrast, special education is characterized as having a "semi-official constitution" in the IDEA- one without a general education counterpoint (Crockett, pg. 85), suggesting that political and pedagogical conflict in special education arose because the framers of the IDEA did not fully consider the difficulties surrounding implementation of a new model through traditional general education institutions.

This sense of a "semi-official constitution" was verbalized by teachers in this study, although in varying degrees. District C teachers spoke of their growing sense of belonging in the general education classrooms, ascribing that success to a strong administrator (new to the district) who developed a supportive climate among her teachers. In the districts where teachers expressed the most dissatisfaction and a sense of separateness, the administrator was cited as the cause for the existence of this divide.

5.4   FINDINGS IN THE AREA OF MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

All of the special educators in this study discussed the importance of monitoring the progress of students with LD to assess individual instructional needs, assess IEP goal attainment, and to plan

for student annual reviews. SETs in District B also described how through daily monitoring their students were as aware of their progress as their teachers were. More than one teacher recognized that in the age of accountability, progress monitoring warrants the amount of time special educators devote to its daily completion.

However, data from the weekly logs highlight the amount of time spent on this task and how time spent in CBM does not always translate into useful data for the teachers to use to affect their instruction. This finding could be utilized to guide in-service topic selection for districts implementing Reading First and could also benefit in the training needs of paraprofessionals who are responsible for progress monitoring in their classrooms.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

There were two primary limitations: The size and availability of the sample and the limited geographic range involved in the sampling. The sample used in this study raises several issues. First, the sample of participants in the focus groups numbered 17 and may not generalize to the broader community of special education teachers. Not all grade levels, service models, or categories of disabilities were represented by the participants in the study. Furthermore, the sample did not include any teachers who have been teaching for less than 3 years. This exclusion was intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of problems, causes, impact and possible solutions. This understanding has been referred to as a sense of accumulation of experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006) that develops over time for classroom teachers.

Another sampling issue was that the study included only voluntary participants teaching in Pennsylvania. Due to the fact that each state has its own specific interpretation and specifications under the umbrella of federal legislation for the education of students with disabilities, conflicts identified by teachers within the study area may reflect the laws in ways that are particular to the state of Pennsylvania and not necessarily reflect what teachers experience in other states.

A third limitation was the absence of a second person to corroborate the analysis of data, affecting the reliability of the findings of this study.

A fourth limitation was the timing of the focus groups and weekly logs. April is generally a month in which SETs turn their attention to the collection of data for IEP writing. April is also the month just following the completion of standardized testing of the student body, which is a very stressful time for both students and teachers. These stresses are most evident in the month of April, and these stresses may have influenced the challenges SETs described in this study.

Nevertheless, enough data were collected, and all of the data analyses were conducted in conjunction with the participants to ensure reliability of the findings of this study.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PRACTICE

In looking across the comments of 17 special education teachers, it was clear that their recommendations should not be viewed as separate and distinct; rather, they were intricately interwoven. For example, the goal of working in general education classrooms to facilitate

successful inclusion of students becomes more challenging in the context of an increasingly diverse student caseload. The goal of planning collaboratively with classroom teachers placed an even heavier demand on the teacher's daily schedule when coupled with the growing paperwork demands. Yet, as each teacher reflected on their own experiences, certain aspects of the work emerged as central challenges. These challenges are perceived as stemming from: the changing composition of their student caseloads with more time spent in behavior management and discipline, the increased emphasis on providing special education services in general education classrooms, and the expanding paperwork responsibilities.

The question asked in focus group sessions was: to what extent do the challenges faced by SETs impact their teaching?" Here, teaching is defined as a teacher's planning, instructional methods and presentation, opportunity to teach, and methods to monitor student progress. Every teacher agreed that the outcome of effective teaching is student learning. The challenges they experience may contribute to ineffective teaching and have a negative impact on themselves and on the students that they teach.

5.6.1   Impact 1: Effectiveness of Special Education Services on Student Achievement

The objective of teaching in special education is to provide services that constitute an appropriate education for students with disabilities. SETs felt the challenges they experienced had a detrimental effect on student learning. For example, many SETs described the difficulty of students who get further and further behind in the general education classroom and the effect of failing on their student's self-concepts and lack of confidence in their own abilities. A student's confidence in their ability to achieve can be influenced by effective teaching when instruction that is relevant and appropriate to the student's abilities results in successful academic

experiences. This is an essential element of student achievement because with confidence students are more likely to take responsibility for their own learning and increase their engagement in schooling (references). Disengaged students were an indicator to the SETs of their inability to meet the individual needs of their students, beginning a cycle of a reduced sense of teaching efficacy (the belief that teachers can affect or at least influence student achievement) leading to feelings of burn-out and discontent.)

5.6.2 Impact 2: Special Education Attrition and Retention

For an organization, poor job design results in failure to achieve goals. For an individual, it results in frustration and work-related stress, which in turn may lead to lowered self-efficacy and increased employee attrition. Negative responses to day-to-day work may also lead teachers to remain in their positions but simply reduce their overall involvement and effort, and to lower their expectations for students. Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff and Harniss (1995) refer to this as retiring on the job. In a study by Carlson and Billingsley (2001), in 22 of 31 schools, poor working conditions were reported to seriously affect teachers' morale, level of effort, and quality of their work. This finding seems particularly important in special education since SETs have been experiencing challenges in their working conditions for over a decade, continuing to describe how these challenges affect their morale, and hence, the quality of their work.

Circumstances such as the ones described in this study, in which districts are responding to reform initiatives and implementing new practices under NCLB, can cause higher stress and lower job satisfaction for teachers. These feelings may be related to teachers' experience of dissonance between their own role expectations about the job of a special education teacher and

the expectations held by others. Indeed, role dissonance is a natural result of the variety of perspectives, philosophies, goals, and approaches to work reflected across the teams of professionals working in schools.

Building-level support from principals and teachers have strong direct and indirect effects on SETs working conditions. The support from both principals and colleagues at the school represents a more contemporary conception than the earlier focus on the building principal only. Ultimately it is the combination of values and actions of the teaching staff and the principal as influenced by the overall school culture that determines the level of support felt by the SET. In this sense, the findings of this study align with the study by Miller and Brownell (1999), which also noted the effects of collegial support on SET retention, and also help to develop an understanding of specific ways colleagues can support SETs. These data from the focus group sessions and weekly logs suggested that insofar as special educators engage in meaningful substantive conversations with principals and faculty at their school about their jobs, role dissonance and stress was reduced. The SETs in this study had a 'we're all in this together" attitude; talking with each other helped ease the feelings of isolation and the pressures of trying to do so many things in one day. All of the SETs reported opportunities to meet with each other were of critical importance to them and their morale.

These findings suggest that given the limited resources of the four districts, there are several critical, relatively low cost means for district personnel to support SETs and increase retention. These include providing opportunities for them to meet with their peers and colleagues to help them think through conflicts and confusions in the demands of their job. Providing meaningful professional development learning opportunities would engender a school

culture that encourages SETs to continue working productively in the field. Teacher B4 had this to say about her principal:

> I get so frustrated when my principal thinks I'm always asking him for something. The truth is, I am always asking for something! But what I really want from him is recognition that my requests are worthwhile and legitimate. What I'm really asking for is appreciation for the importance of my requests.

These data confirm the earlier work of Billingsley and Cross (1992) on the role of the building principal and colleagues in helping make a seemingly unmanageable job manageable.

These data echo findings from general education research as well (McLaughlin (1994). Teachers who participated in strong professional communities tended to exhibit higher degrees of what they called the "service ethic" (care for students with high expectations for students' success). The SETs demonstrated through their focus group discussions a high level of service ethic but not a sense of belonging to a strong professional community outside the community of special education.

5.6.3   Impact 3: Teacher Preparation and Training

Training was identified by teachers not only as a challenge and the cause of challenges, but also as a solution to these challenges. The findings indicated that teachers were able to identify their own professional development needs and seek training to assist in meeting those needs. Based on the results of this study, training in the following areas are recommended: (1) CBM strategies, (2) special education law, updates in the laws, and interpreting the law, (3) developing advocacy skills, (4) strategies for consulting and coaching in the general education classroom, (5) strategies in behavior management and crisis prevention.

5.7   RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers and educators should act on a shared understanding of what special education is intended to be, what it requires and how it can be supported. State and local officials must assume fiscal accountability and guarantee that all schools' resources are adequate for schools to meet new standards as they are established. Several recommendations for practice that may be valuable to teachers, school administrators, and institutions of higher education are listed below.

1. Roles and responsibilities of special education teachers should be clearly defined and these roles should describe the difference between being a general education teacher and a special education teacher. Data collected from this study describe SETs as functioning in a consultative role versus a direct instructional role. Defined in this way, SETs would redefine the consulting teacher model from the 1980's to meet their needs as consulting teachers in the 21st century.

2. The focus of professional development activities should be driven by collaborative problem-solving, focusing on what teachers decide they need to change in their teaching practice. To do this, processes and strategies from research-to-practice and professional development literature would include: concrete examples of innovations tailored to teachers' classrooms; discussions on how innovations may be used; providing repeated opportunities for collaborative discussions; and giving feedback on the use of the innovations.

3. In the age of accountability, special and general educators should be routinely monitoring the progress of students with LD, allowing for instructional decisions to be data-driven. CBM procedures produce accurate, meaningful data about the academic level and academic growth of students which can then be used to make

planning and instructional decisions that enhance educational outcomes for students with LD. Training opportunities in data collection and analysis should be provided.

4.   Inclusive instruction should be viewed as an opportunity to make changes in the instructional practices generally implemented by the GET in the classroom to improve the educational opportunities of all students. Training in ways of providing differentiated instruction and the concept of universal design in lesson planning should be available at both the pre-service and professional development levels.

5.   Little research has been done that tries to make the teacher preparation-classroom practices-student outcomes connection for SETs. More has been done in the area of preparing general education teachers, and some of the findings from that body of research may be applicable to special education teacher preparation. However, there are also substantial differences that make it important to single out the special education connection for research, including: SETs practices go beyond academics; special education teachers are often trained in separate departments apart from general pre-service teachers; and SETs are no longer providing individualized services in segregated settings. Implementing a mixed-methods research design (using data collected from multiple sources such as observations, interviews, surveys, logs, and test scores) would be appropriate. However, this type of research typically occurs with a high cost element, thus, obtaining funds sufficient to carry out this research will require the cooperation of many funding agencies.

Teachers in this study raised a number of questions about the influence of special education law on teacher practice. Research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of federally legislating broad educational mandates without adequate funding or research base.

Future research might address the suggestion raised by Darling-Hammond that "bureaucratic management has undermined program usefulness" (2006, p. 306).

The teachers in this study also defied statistics related to attrition. As the Miller and Brownell (1999) study noted, the effect of collegial support on special education teacher retention. Their study results indicated that building-level support from fellow teachers had a strong direct and indirect effect on critical aspects of teachers' working conditions. Perhaps most importantly, for colleagues who engage in meaningful substantive conversations with each other in their school about their jobs, role dissonance and stress is reduced. Research that extends our understanding of the personality traits and cognitive traits that influence teacher dedication, effectiveness, and fortitude may assist in helping to attract and retain quality special education teachers in the future.

Deschenes, Tyack and Cuban (2001) had a broad educational focus when they shared that a crucial need today is to negotiate a common ground of purpose sufficiently generous, compelling, and plausible that it can unify citizens in support of public schooling. The importance of understanding the challenges, their perceived causes, impacts, and suggested solutions is reinforced by Bateman (1994), who said that special educators fail to learn from the past, because we fail to teach the past or perhaps sometimes, being taught, choose to ignore the lessons. A discipline that has no sense of its own past not only repeats its mistakes, but also spins in place. Morse (1994) adds that the field of special education may need to negotiate a common ground of purpose because special education is fraught with differing opinions. It is also an enterprise far too complex for simplistic answers.

Fullan (1992) cautions that factors affecting change function in interaction and must be treated as such; solutions directed at any one factor in isolation will have minimal impact. The

issues raised by these teachers suggest important questions for further research. Additional data are needed to help special education teachers and those making decisions that impact their work find ways to better meet the needs of students with disabilities.

If special educators are to thrive, then schools must become hospitable places for adults to work and to develop professionally (Crockett, 2004). The field of special education has a strong intervention research base that special educators need to use in their daily work. However, focusing only on intervention is shortsighted. Taking care of students with disabilities requires that care also be directed toward their teachers, what they do, and the complex and often difficult conditions in which they work. A focus on one or two aspects of special educators' work conditions may help, but it will likely be insufficient to substantially increase retention. A holistic view of SETs work conditions is needed to sustain SETs commitment to their work and to make it possible for teachers to use their expertise. Educational opportunities for students with disabilities will be reduced if teachers are concerned about their roles, if teachers' roles are structured in ways that do not allow them to use their expertise, and if substantial teaching time is lost because of nonteaching tasks.

Real life examples of how teachers cope with the challenges of their daily work were revealed through the stories they told in this study. The collective knowledge and experiences of these teachers stand as examples for others in their own practices.

APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

The following terms are used throughout this study. These are the definitions of these terms as they apply in this study.

*Accommodations are defined as modifications of instructional delivery that assist in meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities without altering the content

*Adaptations are defined as modifications to the methods of instructional delivery that assist in meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities by altering the content

*Collaboration is the act of special educators working with general educators in the planning and implementation of instructional accommodations and adaptations in the general education environment (Kauffman, Hallahan, & Lloyd, 1999).

*FAPE is an acronym for "free and appropriate education" and is ensured through special education and related services that are at no cost to the parent, that meet state standards, that are provided at an appropriate school, and that are provided in accordance with the students' IEP (20 U.S.C){70 Fed. Reg. 35837}

*GET is an acronym for general education teacher

*IDEA is the acronym for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a special education law, the purpose of which is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that includes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living. In addition, it ensures that the rights of students with disabilities and their parents are protected and that parents and educators are provided the tools needed to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

*IEP is an individualized education program, a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 20 U.S.C., {Fed.Reg. 35838}

*Inclusion refers to the placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms with peers without disabilities with appropriate programming.

*LRE is the least restrictive environment, or the level of services that is most appropriate for the student while providing integration with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate

*NCLB is the acronym for No Child Left Behind

*SETs is an acronym for special education teacher

*Special Education is defined as specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability {70 Fed. Reg. 35841}

*Students with Learning Disabilities have the following: A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, or do mathematical equations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain

injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps or mental retardation or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

FORMAT FOR COMPLETION OF DAILY LOGS

General Requirements:

1. Recording in your daily log will be for a period of 5 consecutive school days, Monday-Friday.
2. Record the event/task and the time you spent working on that task for each entry.
3. Add comments and details to each entry whenever possible.

Example: MONDAY: 8-9. Talked with GET (10 minutes)

Made copies (10 minutes)

Assisted in GET reading class (40 minutes)

Suggested Format:

Break each day into one hour blocks of time beginning when you arrive to your building

and ending when you leave your building. Any additional work done at home or off-campus after

school hours is to be recorded as "other." For example:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00-9:00				
9:00-10:00				
10:00-11:00				
11:00-12:00				
12:00-1:00				
1:00-2:00				
2:00-3:00				
3:00-3:30				
OTHER				

APPENDIX C

IRB FORMS

IRB required copies of informational documents

Jodi Katsafanas

Ttile: The Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher

I. Letter to the Special Education Director for the district and Principal of the school notifying them of the approval of this study and asking their support before sending a letter to individual special education teachers in their buildings.

Date

Dear_____,

As part of my dissertation work at the University of Pittsburgh, I will be identifying the problems encountered by Special Educators working in instructional settings with students with learning disabilities in Reading First schools. The purpose of this study is to have Special Education teachers describe what problems arise in the areas of planning, instruction and the monitoring of student progress, their perceived causes of these problems, the impact of these problems on their role as Special Education teachers, and their suggestions for solving these concerns.

The title of this study is "The Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher." This is an interpretive study conducted through a focus group methodology. Special Education teachers who have been teaching in your Reading First building/district for a minimum of two years and who work with students with learning disabilities are eligible to participate.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It has been reviewed by faculty of the University of Pittsburgh and approved by dissertation committee and advisor, Dr. Naomi Zigmond. I would appreciate your support in encouraging teachers to participate in the focus group sessions.

II. Letter to teachers notifying them of their qualification to participate in this study- put on University of Pittsburgh letterhead prior to mailing.

Date_____

Dear_____

As part of my dissertation work at the University of Pittsburgh, I will be exploring the challenges faced by Special Education teachers who work with students with learning disabilities in Reading First schools. The three specific areas I will be examining are: challenges while planning for students with learning disabilities, challenges in instructing students with learning disabilities, and challenges encountered while monitoring the progress of your students with learning disabilities.

Once challenges have been identified, I will be asking you to talk about what you perceive to be the causes of these problems, how these challenges impact your role as a special education teacher, and seeking your suggestions for solutions to these challenges as they define your role of a Special Education teacher.

You have been selected to participate in one focus group session of approximately two and one-half hours. As an educator currently working with students with learning disabilities in a Reading First school, your participation in this study will provide pertinent information on the challenges encountered by special educators, as well as insight into the causes and solutions of these challenges. Your participation will inform the field of Special Education of the current challenges you face and the solutions you can offer as the role of a Special Education teacher continues to evolve in Reading First schools.

<div align="right">Initials (   )</div>

- -

Consent to Participate in the study "The Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher

Primary Researcher: Jodi Katsafanas, University of Pittsburgh

Your Name _____

District Name_____

Building Name _____

Your phone and/or email address _____

_____Yes, I am volunteering to participate in this study

_____No, I am not interested in participating in this study

III. Questions for Special Educators Focus Groups

1. What are the challenges that Special Education teachers experience in planning for students with learning disabilities?

a. Tell me about some of the experiences you have had in the area of planning that were challenging for you. Why did this happen?

2. What are the challenges that Special Education teachers experience in the instruction of students with learning disabilities?

a. Talk about some of the experiences you have had in the area of instruction that proved to be challenging. Why did this happen?

3. What are the challenges that Special Education teachers experience while monitoring the progress of students with learning disabilities?

a. Would you talk about challenges you face while monitoring the progress of students in your classroom? Why did this happen?

4. What are the teachers' perceptions of the causes of these challenges?

a. In your teaching experience, what is happening that creates these challenges?

5. What is the impact of these challenges on the role of a Special Education teacher?

a. Would you give some examples of how each of these problems impacts you, your teaching, and the field of special education?

6. What suggestions do teachers have for solving the challenges they encounter?

a.   If you were someone with the power to make changes in your role as a Special Educator, what changes would you make? What suggestions for resolving these challenges can you offer?

<div align="right">Initials (   )</div>

Informed Consent for Participants of Research Projects

Title: The Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher

Investigator: Jodi Katsafanas

I. The purpose of the research project

The purpose of this research project is to explore challenges encountered by Special Education teachers who work with students with learning disabilities in Reading First schools in the planning, instruction, and progress monitoring of students. Challenges will be identified, the perceived causes of these concerns identified, the impact of these problems on the role of a Special Education teacher will be discussed, and suggestions for solving these challenges will be made.

II. Procedures

The procedures for this study include participating in one focus group session to examine how the challenges Special Educators encounter in the areas of planning, instruction and monitoring of student progress define their roles and responsibilities. You were selected to participate in this study based on your current teaching position. Focus group sessions will take approximately two and one-half hours and be held at the University of Pittsburgh.

Following the focus group session you will be asked to keep a written record for one week of problems you encountered in the three areas mentioned above. These logs will be collected and kept by the primary researcher.

III. Risks

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study. The only potential discomfort is sharing of personal/professional experiences obtained from your work with other Special Education teachers from other districts.

IV. Benefits

The benefits of this study include the understanding of the current challenges special educators encounter while teaching students with learning disabilities in order to examine how these challenges impact teaching practices. This study may lead to recommendations that inform school reform efforts in the future.

V. Confidentiality

Your identity as a participant in this study will be confidential. School and participant names will not be used during the study.

Audiotapes of focus groups will be made. They will remain in the possession of the researcher. Written logs will be submitted with only your first name and building name included and no mention of individuals or their schools/districts will be included in the final study document.

VI. Compensation

You will receive monetary compensation of $40.00 (forty dollars) for participating in this study.

VII. Approval of Research

This study has been approved by faculty members from the University of Pittsburgh in the Division of Instruction and Learning: Drs. Zigmond (advisor), Bean, Lyon, Zimmerman and Penn, and from the ADMPS faculty: Dr. Trovato.

VIII. Participant's Responsibilities

As a participant in this study, I voluntarily agree to the following responsibilities:

*to participate in a audio-recorded focus group session of two and one-half hours

*to keep a written daily log for one week following my participation in the focus group session where I record challenges I encountered related to planning, instruction and the monitoring of student progress for students with learning disabilities.

IX. Participants Permission

Name and phone numbers of researcher and others to contact in the event of a pertinent question regarding this research or its conduct.

Name: Jodi Katsafanas

    412.648.3137 (primary researcher)

Name: Naomi Zigmond, Ph.D

    412.648.7103 (dissertation advisor)

Title of Study: The Roles and Responsibilities of a Special Education Teacher

Researcher: Jodi D. Katsafanas

Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh

Focus Group Date _____

1. **Gender**
   Male
   Female
2. **Race**
   White
   Black
   American Indian or Eskimo
3. **Years of teaching experience in special education**
   2-4
   5-7
   8-12
   13-15
   16 or more
4. **Years of teaching special education in your current school district**
   2-4
   5-7
   8-12
   13-15
   16 or more
5. **Ages and grade level of students you teach** (Circle all that apply)

5-6 years old	Kindergarten	Fourth grade
7-8 years old	First grade	Fifth grade
8-10 years old	Second grade	Other_____
11-12 years old	Third grade	

6. **Type of teaching certificate**
   Provisional or emergency
   Bachelors Degree
   Masters Degree

7. Area of endorsement on teaching certificate
   Special education _____
   State where you received this endorsement _____
   College(s)/University   where   you   completed   your   degree(s)
   _____

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