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Exploring the Impact of a University and School District Partnership on Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education and Mentorship

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Exploring the Impact of a University and School District Partnership on Teachers' Perceptions of

Inclusive Education and Mentorship

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Special Education

by

Rosalinda Jauregui Larios

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring the Impact of a University and School District Partnership on Teachers' Perceptions of

Inclusive Education and Mentorship

by

Rosalinda Jauregui Larios

Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Carola Suárez-Orozco, Chair

Inclusive education in public schools is intended for all students, regardless of their ability, race, documentation status, or gender. Although laws and policies have shifted to ensure that children are allowed a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, teachers do not always have the adequate training to accommodate their students' needs, resulting in low teacher morale. Additionally, there is a teacher shortage crisis (Darling-Hammond, 2010) which has led to declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs causing local education agencies to be unable to fill certain positions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). To mitigate this phenomenon, this qualitative study explored how a teacher preparation program collaborated with local school district to empower veteran teachers to work with beginning teachers. The present study unravels the complexities associated with inclusive education and mentorship.

Taking the Inclusive Bioecological Model (Anderson, Boyle, & Deppeler, 2014) into account, an Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model was developed to better understand the contextual factors that could potentially influence teachers' ability to meet the needs of all their students. Various data, including interviews, focus groups, and a survey, were collected in an earlier phase and were analyzed. The findings highlight how the macrosystem impacts the proximal processes between people, power, the context, and time. The lessons from this iteration of the project could serve as a conceptualization of what veteran teachers need and would like to successfully implement inclusive evidence-based practices. School districts and universities should continue to look at ways to collaborate and provide ongoing support for teachers at various phases of their careers. This project was an example of the positive impact that partnerships could have teachers' perceptions about collaborating and revisiting their own praxis.

Keywords: Mentorships, Partnerships, Inclusive Education, Professional Development, Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model

The dissertation of Rosalinda Jauregui Larios is approved.

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2020

¡Con todo mi corazón, este trabajo esta dedicado a mi familia y comunidad!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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VITA

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Larios, R. & Zetlin, A. (2018). Latino Parents' Counterstories of the Individual Education Program (IEP) Meeting, *Urban Education Journal*.

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Larios, R. & Zetlin, A., (2013). Parental involvement and participation of monolingual and bilingual Latino families during individual education program meetings. *Journal of Education Research*, 6(3), 279-298.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As our nation's schools are becoming increasingly diverse[1] (Alsubaie, 2015), teachers are expected to meet the complex learning and social-emotional needs of students from an array of backgrounds (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood; 2017; Esposito, Tang, & Kulkarni, 2018; McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012; Rizzuto, 2017). While, traditionally, teachers earn a credential to teach in a specific grade level and type of setting such as general education or special education, most do not receive systematic training in teaching students with diverse learning needs (Siuty, 2019; Young, 2011). Without adequate preparation for addressing the diverse learning needs of their students, teachers are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs. For veteran teachers, not being able to address the needs of all of their students could adversely impact their morale, leading to the decreased motivation for all members of the school community (Moore, 2012). For new teachers, it may contribute to leaving the profession prematurely, often within the first five years of teaching (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Demographic changes have led to local education agencies and institutes of higher education exploring ways to adequately prepare teachers to work with all students[2] in inclusive settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010). While inclusive education has historically been somewhat controversial (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014, Slee, 2018), as a result of teacher shortages, community pressure, and policy shifts, inclusion is once again becoming a common practice (Esposito et al., 2018; McLeskey et al., 2012). University and district partnerships have the

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[1] Diverse for the purpose of this proposed study will denote individuals who are racially, ethnically, ability, and linguistically diverse.
[2] "All students" is being utilized throughout this study to denote students who may exhibit a wide range of learning and behavioral characteristics, including disabilities, dyslexia, intellectual or academic advancement, and differences based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, and/or geographic origin (CTC, 2016, p. 4)

potential to scaffold mentorship to empower both novice and veteran teachers (Larios, Zetlin, & Ricci, forthcoming; Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2016). Further exploration, however, is necessary to inform the field on how a partnership could best equip teachers with the tools and capacity to work in inclusive settings, meet the needs of all students, and continue in the field beyond the first five years of starting.

Who are our Diverse Learners? Students in American Public K-12 Schools

Today, students in public schools represent a myriad of intersecting abilities and cultures which are influenced by their socio-cultural context (Grant & Zwier, 2011). Accepting that these students are not a monolith is key to understanding whom these students are when providing an equitable and successful schooling experience for them.

During the 2018-2019 academic school year, there were approximately 50 million students enrolled in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The largest racial and ethnic group reported constituted 46.1 percent of the total students, while the other 53.9 percent was made up of the various other subgroups. These percentages, however, shift when compared to states with the most significant number of students. For example, in California, the largest racial and ethnic group does not represent the national landscape (see Table 1). As described in Table 1, four of the five states with the largest number of students in K-12 public schools have higher numbers of students from historically marginalized groups than the national average. If the aim is to improve socio-cultural outcomes for all, policymakers and educators alike should be aware of the complexities associated with student demographics (Alsubaie, 2015; Goodwin, 2002).

Table 1

2013-2014 National student demographics by racial composition

National and State Data	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Hispanic	Black-African American	White	Hawaiian	Two or more	Total
California	0.7	11	53	6	25	0.7	3	13
Texas	0.4	4	52	13	29	0.1	2	10
New York	0.6	9	25	18	47	0.2	1	5
Florida	0.3	3	30	23	41	0.1	3	5
Illinois	0.3	5	25	17	50	0.1	3	4
National	1.1	4.8	25	16	50	0.4	3	100

Defining Terms and Translating Constructs to Theory

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an international neologism used by progressive scholars that often varies in how it is used (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). According to Waitoller and Artiles (2013) the international community equates it with a "broad equity agenda" (p.321). For instance, inclusive education has been defined by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (Anderson, Boyle, & Deppeler, 2014, p.3). While Slee (2018) cites the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2016) ratification that stated in order for inclusion to be successful, schools cannot merely place students with disabilities in mainstream classes. There need to be the accompanying structural changes (i.e., organization, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies), otherwise, it is not inclusion. The United States (US), however, has not signed the ratified convention. Here, in the US inclusive education generally implies "access to the general education classroom for

students with disabilities" (Waitllor & Artiles, 2013, p. 321) and has not been expanded sufficiently to consider diverse populations.

Exclusion

Scholars, such as Roger Slee, James Banks, and Kimberle Crenshaw have vociferously highlighted the social disparities that exist for diverse groups and their work has attempted to enhance the social outcomes for these groups. Globally, Slee (2018) carefully examined exclusion to understand why inclusive education had not gained traction and fell flat. Banks (2015) argued that schools had the potential to help students who were socially ostracized from social processes thrive if schools could effectively celebrate their students' diversity and give them a sense of belonging (Banks, 2015). When describing the experience of Black women, Crenshaw (1989) argued that segregation could not be solved by simply including them into an already established structure. Inclusion and professional development have been a topic of conversation and exploration in education for quite some time.

Intersectionality

The term and theory of intersectionality derived from the understanding that discrimination does not move in any one particular direction and when a person is discriminated against it could stem from one or more of their multiple identities (Crenshaw, 1989). Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black feminist legal academic developed the notion of intersectionality to more clearly explain how an individual, group of people or social problems are often complex and multi-dimensional. Intersectionality has been described as "the co-relational forces of how oppressions such as (but not limited to) racism, sexism, and classism interlock, integrate, and intersect simultaneously within the lives of individuals" (as cited in Carey, Yee, & DeMatthews, 2018, p. 112). Every time a student switches teacher, they are exposed to teachers' preconceived

notions about their background and ability level. If teachers are not cognizant of how their actions impact their students, they might be less inclined to meet students' needs and unintentionally create a toxic learning environment. Moreover, as a result of shifts in practice and teacher preparation programs, teachers may not always be equipped to work with diverse learners. Taking an intersectional approach when training teachers could mitigate misperceptions and insecurities about meeting the diverse learning needs of students.

Professional Development

Over time there have been waves of research conducted on the topic of professional development (PD) for inclusive education. Typically, the literature in this field has focused on what constitutes inclusive education and whom inclusive education is designed for (Slee, 2018). For example, in 2000 there were only nine studies conducted internationally on this topic. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of studies had burgeoned peaking in 2006 (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). In 2015, however, the field of implementation science was described as still being "in its infancy" in relation to studies that focused on how to promote wide-scale adoption, implementation, and measures of outcomes (Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). Therefore, studies on the topic of inclusion both in relation to PD and implementation are definitely lagging behind other areas of research and investigation.

In a report by the Learning Policy Institute (2017), Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner, with the assistance of Espinoza, argued that effective PD was essential to guide teachers as they learned and practiced various pedagogies. After conducting a review of 35 studies, they characterized effective professional development training as having seven critical components. The seven components identified were: (a) content focused, (b) incorporate active learning, (c) supports collaboration, (d) uses models of effective practice, (e) provides coaching

and expert support, (f) offers feedback and reflection, and (g) is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The constructs presented are not novel within the field of education. In fact, they have been the catalyst of research, sparked litigation, and have led to changes in past and current practices. Although, a lingering question remains regarding how to best support both new and veteran teachers, so that students' needs are met without causing them to leave teaching. The current study aims to understand how to best support veteran teachers when they are working with new teachers to address the diverse learning needs of students.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Policies and Practices Impacting Inclusive Education

Policies Related to Inclusion

Under the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, there is an equal protection clause, which was not only the basis for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision but also paved the way for what we now know as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, there has continued to be a number of ways that students of color and non-standard English-speaking students have been discriminated against in schools. Increasingly, courts have been forced to intervene to ensure that all children are given access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Landmark cases such as the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972) paved the way for states and localities to be held accountable to educate children with special needs (OSEP, 2007). In the state of California, there was the case of nine Mexican American students who filed a class action lawsuit *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970). Although that case was settled out of court, it influenced the law by determining that bilingual students were to be assessed in both their primary and English languages before qualifying to receive special education services.

Through the advocacy efforts of parents, organizations, and litigation Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 (OSEP, 2007; Mueller, 2015) renamed IDEA in 1990 (Yell & Bateman, 2017). EAHCA derived from the need to ensure that all children with disabilities had access to a FAPE and least restrictive environment (LRE). Moreover, EAHCA beyond a FAPE and LRE, it was also intended to include special education

and related services designed to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities as well as prepare them for advanced education, career readiness, and independent living (Yell, Conroy, Katsiyannis, & Conroy, 2013). Time and again, the courts have had to step in regarding school districts practices to ensure that students had access to two key federal mandates under the IDEA: a FAPE and LRE.

It has been argued that a lack of understanding as to how to carry out policies has led to an inaccurate and often debatable implementation of policies (Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). Regardless of the laws and policies in place, parents have had to continuously organize to ensure adequate practices by local education agencies (Mueller, 2015). For example, in the *Jose P v. Ambach* (1979) class-action lawsuit, English learners (EL) students with disabilities claimed that they were not given an appropriate education because their school boards neglected to assess them in a timely manner and place them in special programs (Mueller, Singer, & Grace, 2004). Courts cases have had to go as far as having to determine if students should or should not be included in the general education classroom. In the case of, *Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District,* a landmark court case, held that 'inclusion is a right, not a special privilege for a select few' (1993, concluding remarks as cited in Esposito, 2018). More recently, after years of court rulings that stated students with disabilities under IDEA were only entitled to the minimum (see Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley [1982]), the *Endrew F. v Douglas County School District* (2017) case ruled that only offering the bare minimum could hardly be said to be any education at all and held that "a school must offer an Individual Education Program (IEP) reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" (Yell & Bateman, 2017).

Federal laws such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was a reauthorization of ESEA recognized that teachers have not always been equipped to meet the needs of their students (Yell, Conroy, Katayanis, & Conroy, 2013). Therefore, as part of NCLB, it was required that all teachers have subject matter competencies and were highly qualified to teach the specific subject matter they were assigned to teach. Accountability would be measured through high-stakes tests. According to Marshall and Gerstein-Pepin (2005), the purpose for NCLB was to promote literacy and testing standards for lower-income children (Brown, 2015; Close, Amrein-Beardsley, & Collins, 2018; Gonzalez, Peters, Orange, & Grigsby, 2017; Marshall & Gerstein-Pepin, 2005). Marshall and Gerstein-Pepin described NCLB as a quality federal policy with elements of equity within it. Others have argued that high-stakes testing has had a negative effect on student learning and teacher practices (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Thibodeux, Labat, Lee, and Labat, 2015).

In 2015, Congress approved replacing the NCLB requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Egalite, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2017; Ladd, 2017). While ESSA did not do away with high stakes testing, it scaled back on the amount of control the federal government had over educational policy, returning the majority of the power back to the state level (Close et al., 2018; Egalite et al., 2017; Ladd, 2017). It is too soon to know how the states will do (Ladd, 2017), nonetheless, scholars are hopeful that "greater local control has led to some encouraging signs of teacher change" (Close et al., 2018, p. 4).

Furthermore, there is hope that ESSA will reduce inequity and improve educational outcomes for students (Egalite et al., 2017). Given this sense of hope by the federal government returning some of the accountability to the state level, it is necessary for researchers to analyze

just how states are responding to the latest reauthorization of ESEA- ESSA as it has implications

for all students educated in public schools. In particular, it is essential to examine how teacher

preparation programs are working with local school districts in the state of California to prepare

potential mentor teachers to work with beginning teachers whose teacher preparation is aligned

with the new teacher performance expectations.

Professional Development

Literature related to the topic of professional development and teacher learning has

provided the field with invaluable data and implications that professional development has on

educators (Borko, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Dafonte & Barton-

Arwood, 2017; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Reviews have been

systematic, and the topic of professional development has been a topic of study abroad and

domestically.

Early studies such as Garet et al. (2001) have examined national data to compare the

distinct effects that various professional development attributes had on teacher learning.

Analyzing self-reported data from 1,027 science and math teachers, they concluded that teachers

benefitted and preferred interactive activities. Professional development models such as

workshops, collective participation of teachers from the same school site, grade or subject also

known as professional learning communities, and ongoing in-depth opportunities to explore a

topic were the most beneficial for teachers (Garet et al., 2001). In 2007, Penuel et al. had similar

findings and contributed to the existing body of literature by positing that teachers also needed

time to plan for implementation of the proposed program (Penuel et al., 2007).

More recently, professional learning communities (PLCs) have surfaced as a viable way

to encourage teachers to work together towards the common goal of school improvement

(Stewart, 2014; Walton, Nel, Muller, & Lebeloane, 2014; Webster & Wright, 2017).

International scholars in South Africa, have examined how teachers who taught in an inclusive

school viewed and experienced professional development. They found that workshops alone are

not enough and recommend that more emphasis be put on professional learning communities.

PLCs can vary in definition; they have been described as a practice that does not solely focus "on

individual teacher learning, but on the professional learning; within the context of a cohesive

group; that focuses on collective knowledge and occurs within an ethic of interpersonal caring"

(Walton et al., 2014, p. 321). Research in the area of professional learning that examines the

learner, context, and learning all together is still needed as they are typically studied in isolation

of one another (Webster-Wright, 2017).

Examining what professional development research for inclusive education looks like,

specifically, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) conducted a systematic literature review for studies

done between 2000 and 2009. They included 42 eligible journal articles and included the trends

of when studies on the topic were conducted and identified that inclusive education was nested in

three overarching areas: (a) those concerned with only ability differences, (b) those looking to

enhance the curriculum by taking into account gender and cultural differences, and (c) articles

that saw inclusion as a process of overcoming barriers to participation and learning for all

students (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). They recommended that professional development use an

intersectional approach that would allow teachers to identify and dismantle existing barriers to

the inclusion of all students (p. 347).

A group of international scholars (Messiou et al., 2016) participated in a collaborative

action research project to present "an innovative strategy for helping teachers respond positively

to learner diversity" (p. 45). They argue that a combination of (a) including student voices can

help educators be more sensitive, (b) engaging multiple perspectives could promote professional discussion and experimentation amongst educators, (c) collaboration supports the introduction of new practices, and (d) learning from differences has the potential to challenge status quo within a school would be strengthened if employed by partnering institutions or schools (Messiou et al., 2016). The recommendations offered by Messiou and colleagues coupled with the recommendations made by Waitoller and Artiles (2013) could advance earlier findings as well as provide a framework way for institutes of higher education and local education agencies to work with schools and teachers.

Resistance to Inclusive Education

Slee (2018) posited that placing students with disabilities without the appropriate structural changes such as organization, curriculum, and learning strategies are not enough and do not constitute inclusion (p. 47). The microsystem being the closest to the learner has the greatest and most immediate influence. Teachers, if given effective training, are in a unique position to influence student thinking and increase all students' intellectual development (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Inclusive education admittedly, is not a common practice and teachers, starting with their teacher preparation are not trained to teach in inclusive settings.

Studies related to teachers' perspectives have suggested that inclusion is only accepted by teachers in theory (Naraian, 2014; Tiwari, Das, & Sarma, 2015). Furthermore, lack of adequate training contributes to the reason for teachers not being able to effectively meet the needs of diverse learners (Brown, 2015; Dudley Marling & Burns, 2014; Naraian, 2014; Tiwari et al., 2015). Dudley Marling and Burns (2014) argued there were two perspectives held by educators in the United States, a deficit position and social constructivist perspective in relation to

inclusive education. Further exploration and studies on the preparation and implementation of inclusive education are warranted as studies in this area are scarce.

Teacher Morale

It has been argued that teachers have become disillusioned with teaching as a profession (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010; Brown, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016; Thibodeux et al., 2015). In a report about teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S., Sutcher and colleagues (2016), listed the top five reasons for leaving the profession. On the contrary, in a mixed methods study, Thibodeux et al. (2015) found that the top three reasons for teachers' remaining in the profession were: student success, subject matter taught, and the art of teaching. Whereas Sutcher et al. (2016) reported the five top reasons for leaving the field were: (a) dissatisfaction, (b) family/personal reasons, (c) retirement, (d) pursuing another job, and (e) financial reasons (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Overwhelmingly, Sutcher et al.'s 2016 report found that 55% of teachers who left the field were dissatisfied. Of the teachers who were dissatisfied, 42% had left because of the assessments[3] associated with the profession. Assessments are administered to students to measure their progress towards district benchmarks and state academic standards (Brown, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2017). High stakes testing is a way that some states ensure teachers are teaching the state academic standards and administrators are effectively managing their schools (Brown, 2015; Close et al., 2018).

Recent studies have suggested that teachers who teach high stakes subject matter content such as math, writing, reading or science were more likely to have higher levels of job-related stress when compared to teachers who identified as non-high-stakes subject matter teachers

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[3] Assessments are used interchangeably with high-stakes tests.

(Gonzalez et al., 2017). Ryan et al. (2017) had similar findings, however, their survey of 1866 teachers across three states only consisted of teachers who taught high stakes subject matter content. Similarly, Gonzalez et al. (2017) and Thibodeaux et al. (2015) found that paperwork and workload was a burden for teachers. Gonzalez et al. specifically noted that a challenging curriculum, testing students in special education, and instructional remediation had adversely affected teacher stress levels.

Studying the experience of two first-year teachers' Brown (2015) developed two case studies to understand how novice teachers experienced and perceived high-stakes reforms. Through a comparative analysis, Brown found that one teacher quickly made test preparation a central focus for her class in order to meet the school expectations and performance standards. As for the other teacher, she seemed less concerned with test preparation and more concerned with 'trying to survive' as an English as a second language (ESL) teacher. In her role as the ESL teacher, she was not given a curriculum. Additionally, she was required to manage the documentation associated with the program. At the end of the first year, both teachers were highly disillusioned by the policymakers' high-stakes reforms. According to Brown, researchers, teacher educators, and teacher mentors need to raise awareness about the political and economic changes impacting novice teachers.

Both Gonzalez et al. (2017) and Brown (2015) noted how working with students in special education and students in an ESL program was a challenge in and of itself. Whereas the teacher in Brown's study was teaching in an isolated learning environment, the teachers in Gonzalez et al.'s study ranged in the types of instructional settings. Some taught modified courses, and other teachers taught in inclusive settings. Having to assess students in special education presented different challenges for teachers because the high stakes tests were typically

two to three grade levels above students' ability level. The teachers in Gonzalez et al.'s study struggled with providing enough instruction at the right level to adequately prepare students (p. 525). Other studies have also reported that is not uncommon for teachers who have students with disabilities in their class to struggle with assessments (Theoharis, Causton, & Tracy-Bronson, 2016).

Testing alone though was not the only hardship that new teachers have been found to encounter. Pardo (2006) conducted an explorative study with three beginning elementary teachers centered around their writing lessons. Findings illustrated that the beginning teachers grappled with teaching writing and had relied on a trial and error approach to improve their instruction. They struggled with the role that policy mandates played on their instructional practices. Pardo suggested that it was mutually important for beginning teachers to understand what a teaching context was, and that teaching is "a decision-making process that involves managing, navigating, and finessing one's teaching context" (p. 393). Fieldwork could potentially be a place where new teachers begin to understand a teaching context. Through successful mentorship, new teachers could learn to effectively be part of a school community.

Around the same time, Pardo's study was published, Flores and Day (2006) released a longitudinal study of new teachers' professional identities during their first years as teachers. They followed 14 teachers during their first two years of teaching to explore how the novice teachers' assumptions and values about teaching and the profession were being challenged and how the context and culture of the school were impacting them. They found that the teachers' stability and instability of their identity as teachers was grounded in their past experiences such as: (a) personal experience, (b) teacher preparation, (c) the school culture, and (d) the administrators at their new jobs. Flores and Day (2006), recommended that teacher preparation

programs provide more opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and the cultural

contexts of schools to have a better understanding of their own identity before entering the

classroom (Flores & Day, 2006). Similar findings were echoed by Friesen and Besley (2013)

who posited that requiring students in teacher preparation programs to be reflective could help

their development as teachers. Accordingly, it is imperative to explore the potential barriers and

obstacles that could impede veteran teachers' ability to mentor new teachers.

A Space for Potential Intervention

Acknowledging that there is a need to reconsider how institutes of higher education and

local education agencies work together, efforts have been made to decrease teacher attrition rates

(Ponte & Twomey, 2014; Van Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma, & Rouse, 2007; Zeichner et al.,

2016). As a result of ESSA, state officials, institutes of higher education and local education

agencies have begun to explore how they could work together to bolster teacher outcomes

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). One way to increase teacher morale, job satisfaction, and

retention would be through ongoing professional development around issues related to inclusion.

If teachers felt equipped to address the diversity of their students and teach in inclusive settings,

they would be more likely to have better outcomes all around.

Teachers in American public schools are required to successfully complete a teacher

credentialing program. Upon entering teacher preparation programs, future teachers are separated

based on the credential they are interested in earning (Young, 2011). In an attempt to understand

inclusive education, Young (2011) examined how space had influenced teacher preparation

programs' inclusive mission. What she uncovered was that the inescapable separation between

general and special education hindered the progressive aims of the institutes of higher education

(Young, 2011). Throughout the program, future teachers underwent a series of fieldwork

experiences, tests, and courses with minimal exposure to classmates and faculty from other credential programs (Young, 2011). For many, the segregation between general education and special education continues long after teachers finish their program and enter the workforce. To remedy the situation, Booth (2011) examined the notion of inclusive development of teacher education and suggested universities put inclusive values into the mission and design of their program, not merely present it in theory. By doing so, Wolfberg et al. (2009) demonstrated how their interdisciplinary program was able to provide the students in their program the opportunity to earn credentials in multiple areas at a faster rate benefiting from the multiple disciplines.

The teacher shortage crisis has not only called attention to teacher preparation programs but to school district as well (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As a result of the 2007-2009 United States recession, universities have experienced a decline in enrollment to teacher preparation programs (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016) which has left local education agencies unable to fill certain positions. School districts have resorted to having substitutes or teachers who are still training fill those positions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Studies have focused on understanding the phenomenon of teacher retention (Brownell et al., 2010; Karge & McCabe, 2014; Zhang & Zeller, 2016; Whitford, Zhang, & Katsiyannis, 2018). In 2016, Zhang and Keller noted that there was a link between the type of preparation and retention of teachers in schools. They argued that access to teaching resources, perceived support from school districts, and competency knowledge should be considered as factors of teacher retention (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Therefore, institutes of higher education and local education agencies have to tackle how to address teacher shortages and some of the well-known challenges that are keeping people from entering the field or leaving the field only after a few years of

teaching (Brownell et al., 2010; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016).

Researchers have noted time and time again, to be effective in their roles, novice special educators need systematic mentoring and coaching, especially during the first few months in the classroom (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Betlem, Clary, & Jones, 2019; Whitaker, 2000; Whitford, Zhang, & Katsiyannis, 2018; White & Mason, 2006). Karge and McCabe (2014) surveyed 124 teachers, 96 percent of which started their careers as interns, and been in the field for over 10 years. Through their survey, Karge and McCabe noted that teachers who remained in the field had received in-depth training and support in the following areas: (a) mentoring and supervision, (b) pedagogical training in instruction and curriculum, (c) frequent and substantive evaluation, (d) meaningful collaboration, and (e) working with diverse students (Karge & McCabe, 2014). Universities and local education agencies should continue to work together to provide professional development for both novice and veteran teachers. Doing so would address concerns of low teacher morale and retention.

To further complicate matters, in 2016 the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) adopted new standards for beginning general education teachers. Therefore, beginning teachers are entering the workforce with different teacher performance expectations (TPEs) than teachers who entered the field prior to 2016. These new TPEs expect teachers to be able to meet the diverse learning needs of all students (CTC, 2016). While promising in some ways, this requirement is potentially problematic because earlier studies have found that special education preservice teachers often complete their programs feeling that they lack subject content knowledge, while general education teachers finish with a lack of content knowledge on accommodations and modifications (see Shin, Lee, & McKenna, 2016 for an extensive review).

Additionally, the disconnect between novice and veteran teachers will be greater if their expectations and pedagogy do not align. In short, without proper support and coaching the demands of the TPEs in the state of California could lead to a greater sense frustration on behalf of both new and veteran teachers.

<div align="center">

Theoretical Framework

</div>

Inclusive Education Through an Intersectional and Ecological Lens

Inclusion was described by Booth (2011) as a concept that included interweaving values extending to a range of educational activities. Anderson et al.'s (2014) framework considered the sociocultural and institutional factors that influenced teaching and inclusive education. While Anderson and colleagues (2014) adapted Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to create *the ecology of inclusive education*, their work was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's earlier models and did not account for process-person-context-time (PPCT). In 1998, Bronfenbrenner and Morris incorporated the four principal components of PPCT. The PPCT model includes the five nested systems in Bronfenbrenner's original model and is not exclusive to them (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). To deconstruct institutional barriers, it is important to also incorporate PPCT in order to create effective professional development models.

Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT)

The essence of the PPCT is the proximal process. It is described as the development that reciprocally transpires for a person within any given environment (Lee & Martinek, 2013). An individual's disposition, resources, and demand directly affect the *proximal process* (Lee & Martinek, 2013). A *person's disposition or temperament* affects how they are able to address new or adversarial situations. The *context*, also described as environment or set of nested structures known as proximal and distal processes are positioned in this component (Trummer,
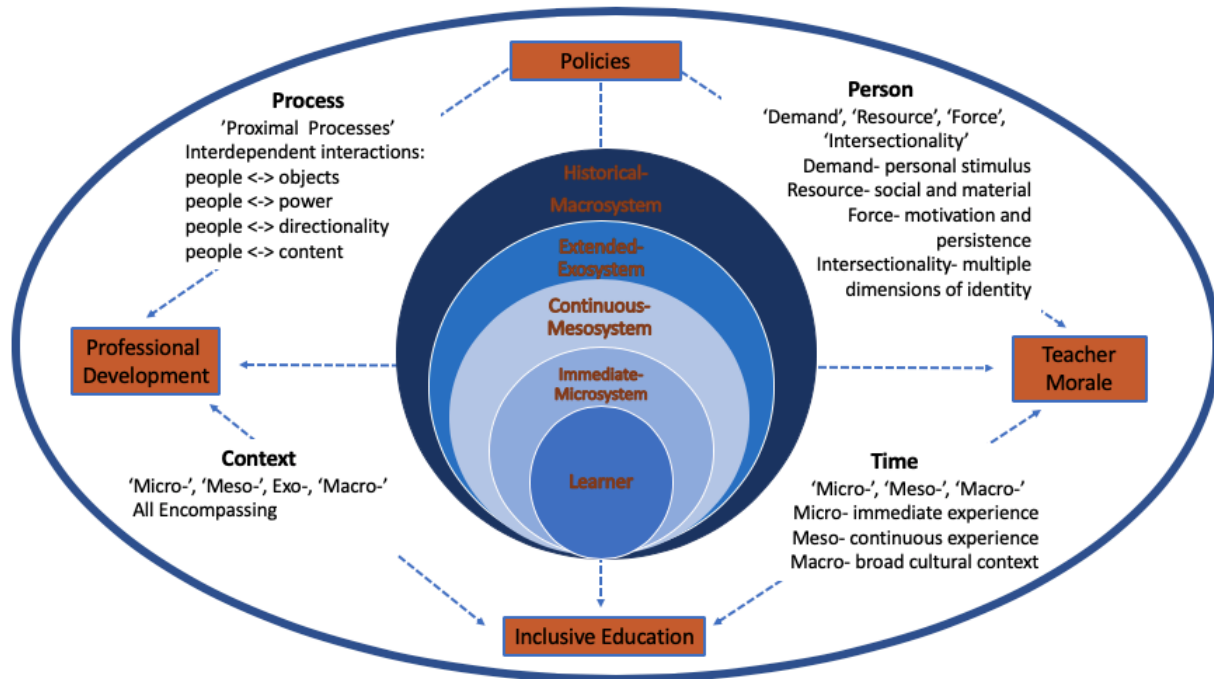
<div align="center">19</div>

2017). The macrosystem is largely influenced by social attitudes, values, legislation and beliefs (Anderson et al., 2014; Beveridge, 2005; & Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Whereas the exosystem consists of the social structures that impact what happens in the micro- and mesosystems (Anderson et al., 2014; Beveridge, 2005; & Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The mesosystem is comprised of the various interrelationships between the decision makers and key stakeholders (Anderson et al., 2014; Beveridge, 2005; & Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Lastly within the context is the microsystem, which is the system closest to the learner. The final component of the model is *time* and includes the rate of change that occurs between the person and all of the other components. The primary unit of analysis for the purpose of the study, will be the teachers.

Pedagogy, which challenges students to think critically, socially, emotionally, and politically is paramount to engaging and empowering students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds (e.g., Banks, 2015; Gay, 2010, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Pedagogy alone is not enough, however, educators also need to be mindful of how students with multiple intersections of identity understand, experience and are affected by the lessons presented in school (Carey et al., 2018). Being able to understand the ecology of inclusive education in in relation to how intersectionality influences our perceptions and actions is imperative to addressing the needs of educators and students alike.

Below, I provide an expanded vision for Inclusive Bioecological Education (see Figure 1) and have preserved the original model at the center. The four principle PPCT components have been added to each corner. Considering that these factors move in various directions and are interdependent, I have situated them all within the same space and added intersectionality. It has been placed under the person component since identity cannot solely be accounted for under the three previous descriptors it has been added as a fourth trait.

Figure 1

Expanded Bioecological Model for Inclusive Education

Process
'Proximal Processes'
Interdependent interactions:
people <-> objects
people <-> power
people <-> directionality
people <-> content

Person
'Demand', 'Resource', 'Force',
'Intersectionality'
Demand- personal stimulus
Resource- social and material
Force- motivation and
persistence
Intersectionality- multiple
dimensions of identity

Policies

Professional Development

Teacher Morale

Historical-Macrosystem
Extended-Exosystem
Continuous-Mesosystem
Immediate-Microsystem
Learner

Context
'Micro-', 'Meso-', Exo-', 'Macro-'
All Encompassing

Time
'Micro-', 'Meso-', 'Macro-'
Micro- immediate experience
Meso- continuous experience
Macro- broad cultural context

Inclusive Education

Aims and Research Questions

As discussed in the literature review above, a variety of factors inhibit teachers from working with diverse learners. A team that consisted of a university faculty and a school district administration developed a professional development intervention that was specific to each of the three elementary school sites. This present study unravels the complexities associated with inclusive education by describing how this yearlong intervention may have served to shift the school climate to create a more collaborative school culture around the goal of inclusion. Using an Expanded Bioecological Model of Inclusive Education, I consider how teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices could impact diverse learners. The following questions guided this study aim to shed light on the efforts of university and school district partnerships to improve mentorship and inclusive education.

RQ1- How do general and special education teachers experience professional development related to inclusion focused on working with diverse learners?

RQ2- What barriers and obstacles might facilitate or conversely inhibit veteran teachers' ability to mentor new teachers?

Summary

The chapter began with a timeline of the policies related to inclusion. Next, the existing body of literature associated with professional development related to inclusion was presented. Subsequently, some of the major challenges new teachers encounter as they the field were unpacked while noting gaps in the existing literature. In summation, the essence of this chapter was to conceptualize why there is a need to explore how the Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model could help the field visualize the nuances that emerge when a school district and university work together to foster teacher capacity.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Positionality

I entered the teaching profession as an intern teacher on a provisional credential in special education, largely in part because the classroom I was teaching in at the time was considered a "hard to fill position." During that time, I completed credential courses, seminars, fieldwork hours, and was appointed a district mentor who was also a graduate of my university program. What I quickly found was that the teaching requirements from the university, general education teachers' preparation, and the requirements of the district did not always align. For example, the university emphasized co-teaching and inclusion, whereas the district did not. Moreover, my general education colleagues did not always have the appropriate strategies to successfully address all of their students' needs but were far more versed in specific core content.

Since I entered the field in the early 2000s, the literature has noted co-teaching and inclusion as best practice (Friend & Cook, 2017). What I have found, however, was if I ever wanted to engage in co-teaching and include my students with their general education peers, I had to seek out a partner teacher, carve out common planning time, and move my daily class schedule around to make co-teaching possible. The effort that it took on my part is something that might not be afforded to all new teachers. Additionally, co-teaching takes two people who are willing to share the responsibilities of planning and delivering instruction (Friend & Cook, 2017). The current study seeks to explore how teachers, school principals, and universities grapple with preparing today's teachers to work in inclusive settings. Understanding that every district is distinct, this current study is situated in a larger more urban than the one I once taught at. I am no longer in a teacher role and am approaching this study from a different lens, a university partner who is now preparing teachers to go out into the field.

In my most recent role at the university, as a Project Coordinator for an Integrated Teacher Education Program, I have worked alongside faculty to redesign the curriculum so that students could earn both their multiple subject and education specialist credential as undergraduates. Part of this accelerated dual credential will include one full year of a residency, which means there will need to be schools that are ready to work with teacher candidates. As part of the preparation, I have been a key player in the development of the future clinical sites having a role in every aspect of the project from writing new courses to developing and implementing professional development trainings.

Collaborative Action Research Design

Similar to Messiou et al. (2016) and Betlem et al. (2019), the current study followed a collaborative action research design, which has been described by Mirriam and Tisdell (2016) as a type qualitative inquiry that is "focused more on organizational change" (p. 55). Mirriam and Tisdell outlined four principles critical to action research. The first guiding principle is to focus on a "problematic situation." In this instance it was a teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices as well as to mentor teachers entering the field. The second principle is that the study emerges through a cyclical process. As demonstrated in Figure 2 and discussed in the subsequent sections, this study was multi-phased. The third principle calls for the researchers and participants to engage as co-investigators. The research team consisted of individuals from the university as well as the school district. Stakeholders from both organizations were in agreement with the data collection, intervention, and decision making. The fourth principle in action research is that if the lead researcher is an outsider, they engage with a group of insiders from the organizations as co-researchers. As discussed in my positionality statement, I was both an insider and outsider throughout the course of this study, I frequently conducted member checks and

collaborated with the research team from both institutions. This aligned perfectly with the fifth

principle which suggests that the research team "collect and analyze multiple forms of data in a

systematic way as the research process unfolds" (Mirriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 52).

Below I present two figures. The first (Figure 2) provides an overview of this multi-phase

design. The second (Figure 3) provides a more detailed insight into what specifically took place

during the professional development phase. During the 2017-2018 school year, teachers were

surveyed to determine the types of professional development that each school site was interested

in exploring. The data from that first phase were analyzed to inform the second phase which took

place during the 2018-2019 school year. During the second phase, a series of professional

development trainings were conducted. Further, various data, including interviews, focus groups,

and an additional survey, were collected. The third and final phase included analyzing the data

from the second phase to answer the current research questions.
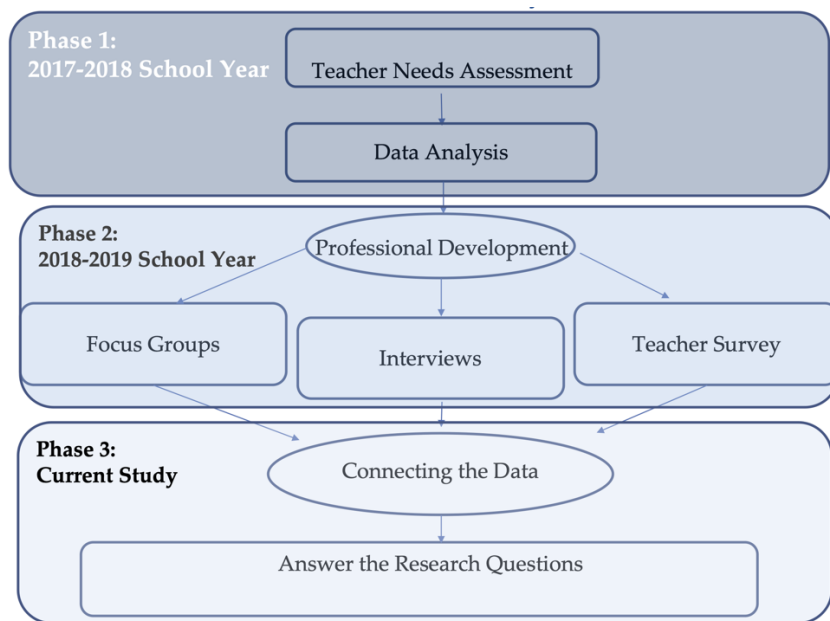
Figure 2

Multi-Phase Design

Figure 3

The Professional Development

PD 1 (Fall 2018)	PD 2 (Fall 2018)	Check-In (Fall 2018)	PD 3 (Spring 2019)	Interviews (Spring 2019)	PD 4 (Spring 2019)	Check In (Spring 2019)
1.Collaboration and Differentiated Instruction • Student Work Sample Analysis 2.Reflection in PLCs	1.PBIS or UDL Module 2.Reflection in PLCs	1.Focus Group(s) • Meet with a small group of teachers and principals to reflect on the first two sessions	1.PBIS or UDL Module 2.Reflection in PLCs	1.Three School Administrators 2.Nine Classroom Teachers 3.Three University Representatives	1.Co-Teaching 1.Readers Theater Narrative 2.Reflection in PLCs	1.Focus Group(s) • Same as first check in 2.Post Assessment 1. Survey

Member Checks

Throughout all phases of this project district stakeholders contributed to the development of the measures. The district partners and principals had access to all of the collected data before it was reported back to the teachers at each site. The various stakeholders at the university and school district had the opportunity to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Additionally, a counterstory that included the interview findings was presented, in the form of a reader's theater script, to all of the teachers at each school site.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Approval for the third phase of the study included getting consent from two universities and the school district IRB committees. It took approximately two months to secure consent from all three institutions. First, because of the nature of the project, I consulted with the IRB committee at UCLA to see if my study was a secondary analysis. We discussed the nature of the partnership, how the present study emerged, and the work that was transpiring between the school district and university. They advised that because the data that were being collected or would be collected regardless of my intentions that the study could be a secondary analysis.

Due to the fact that I am a graduate student at two universities, UCLA provided assurance to Cal State LA. Once I completed the process and attained consent, Cal State LA approved the

study, and the forms were submitted to the district for the final approval. Per the district's request, the participants (teachers and administrators) had to give prior consent to having the data used for the purpose of this study. Therefore, this study only included data collected from the second focus groups, interviews, and post professional development survey. Participants were all informed and consented to the data being utilized for the present study.

Partnership Development (First Phase)

During the 2017-2018 school year, stakeholders from a local district special education division and the university special education department met to discuss their visions and agreed to identify a few local elementary school sites that would be open to participating in an ongoing partnership. Throughout those meetings, a partnership team emerged. The team consisted of two Program Specialists- teachers who are currently outside of the classroom supporting special education teachers, two Least Restrictive Environment administrators from the district office, the district Director of Special Education for the local district, one professor and myself representing the university. As the Project Coordinator, I orchestrated team meetings, co-presented the findings from the needs' assessments, prepared the professional development trainings along with the protocols for the interviews and focus groups.

Together, the team met with the three principals to share our aims. Without hesitation, all of the principals agreed to participate, and we were soon invited to meet with their faculty to conduct a needs assessment. Within a month of administering the needs assessment we reported back to the school and shared the findings. From those findings we proposed four professional development trainings with two focus groups and a survey to be administered at the conclusion of the year (see Figure 2). It was agreed upon that the professional development trainings were going be delivered during staff meetings by the partnership team. In preparation for the 2018-

2019 academic year, I participated regular webinar meetings with the National Center for Teacher Residency to receive additional guidance and support.

Participating Schools

Elementary Schools

There was a total of three elementary schools selected to participate in this project. Each school was situated less than five miles from the university. All of the schools involved had a majority Latinx student population and were all part of local Initiative, to develop a pathway for college and career success initiative aimed at promoting greater academic outcomes for all students in the immediate area (see Table 2). Each of the schools varied in size, with the smallest school having 381 students and the largest having 728. According to the California Department of Education website, during the 2018-2019 academic school year, over 80% of the students are Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (see Table 3).

A large percentage of the teachers had been teaching for more than 15 years. As described in Table 4, the average number of years teaching for each site was over 20 years. The small handful of teachers who were considered new teachers were all special education teachers and had been teaching for less than five years. When the partnership began two of the principals were in their third year of leadership, while the principal at School C was in her first year at that particular site.

Table 2

Students by racial composition

Ethnicity	School A	School B	School C
Total Number of Students	728	381	420
African American	-	1.0%	0.7%
American Indian	-	-	-
Asian	-	3.1%	0.5%
Filipino	-	0.3%	
Hispanic or Latinx	99.3%	95.3%	96%
Pacific Islander	-	-	-
White	0.7%	-	2.9%
Two or More Races	-	-	-
Not Reported	-	0.3%	-

Table 3

Students by subgroups

	School A K-5	School B K-6	School C K-5
Total Number of Students	728	381	420
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	97%	87%	93%
English Learners	38%	10.5%	33%
Foster Youth	0.8%	0.79%	0.48%
Students with disabilities (SWDs)	14%	12%	16.6%
Homeless Youth	1.3%	4%	4.7%

Table 4

Teachers experience and area of expertise

	School A K-5	School B K-6	School C K-5
Total Number of Teachers	34	20	23
Average Years of Experience	22 years	23 years	25 years
General Education Teachers	78.1%	75%	78.3%
Special Education Teachers	21.9%	25%	21.7%

University

As part of the conceptual framework, the university teacher preparation program who is collaborating with the school district strives to "prepare outstanding and caring educators, counselors, and leaders to work with diverse learners in urban schools…" (Conceptual Framework, 2019). Their framework included four core values: educational equity, reflective practice, professionalism, and collaboration. Divided into three divisions they prepare individuals to work in various capacities within the educational context. They offer a range of degrees and credentials and work with over 70 local school districts. The university was invested in this partnership because they were seeking ways to better prepare their teachers in training in order to keep teachers in the field for more than five years.

Professional Development (Second Phase)

The four professional development workshops were designed by the partnership team following the recommendations of the Learning Policy Institute (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, & Espinoza, 2017). Initially, we identified four potential professional development models. Then, with the help of district administrators we narrowed the focus down to looking at student work (Warren Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003) in the context of PLC study groups (Stewart, 2014).

One consistent element included PLCs. The PLCs that were formed at the first professional development gave the teachers an opportunity to work with one another in small groups across grade levels and credentials. At every training, teachers participated in PLCs. The PLCs were instrumental in allowing teachers to share their content expertise and ideas. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) argued that PLCs not only expand teachers' scope of understanding, but

also their ability see others' perspectives. Furthermore, the PLCs offered teachers the opportunity to put student needs back at the center of their planning and instruction. Since the teachers at the three sites were mostly veteran teachers, it was important for the research team to have them engage in dialogue with one another.

The various trainings were held at each school site where the teachers had their regularly scheduled staff meetings. Each training promoted high-leverage practices to advance teachers' understanding effective collaboration, assessment, social/emotional and behavior support, and instruction (McLeskey & Brownell, 2015). At the end of the first three professional development trainings the teachers completed an exit ticket which helped them reflect on what they had been presented and helped the presenters plan accordingly. During the last training the teachers were asked to complete a survey.

Professional Development 1- Differentiated Instruction

As demonstrated in Figure 3, the first workshop was designed to help teachers explore how they might use or were already using Differentiated Instruction in their classroom and to highlight why collaborating with colleagues could be beneficial. Differentiated Instruction is a practice commonly used to help students access the core curriculum and standards. It was described by Shogren et al. (2015) as one teaching strategy could be effectively taught in inclusive classrooms. This same professional development workshop was presented at all three schools. Teachers were asked to take three student work samples to the training to evaluate the unique needs of their students by looking at the same writing assignment. They were asked to take into account the students' socio-emotional and academic strengths and needs. Shortly after, they switched with a colleague to see how their analysis and differentiated strategies aligned or diverged. Lastly, we facilitated a group discussion about their observations.

31

Professional Development 2- Introducing Positive Behavior Intervention Support or Universal

Design for Learning

For the second workshop Schools A and C focused on Positive Behavior Intervention

Support (PBIS) and School B focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (see Vaughn,

Bos, & Schumm, 2018). Slee (2018) identified UDL as a way to address the challenge of

difference in trying to make the content accessible because it welcomes multiple means of

representation, engagement, and expression. PBIS on the other hand, is a tiered behavioral

support system focused on the prevention of unwanted behavior by developing flexibility

regarding classroom management. It is intended to reduce the need for more extreme behavioral

interventions such as removal from class.

For Schools A and C, the team presented an overview of what PBIS was. Next, we asked

them to anonymously write what some of their most challenging behaviors were on an index

card. We introduced the various tiers of PBIS, along with a few strategies on how to effectively

stop behaviors before they started. We shared some evidence-based routines and procedures

through role playing and you-tube videos. We collected the cards from earlier, then redistributed

them asking the teachers to think about how they would respond to the behavior on the card. In

their PLC followed with a whole group discussion, everyone had the opportunity to share how

they would handle the behavior(s) on the card. At the end, we collected the cards and encouraged

them to practice the strategies we had reviewed.

With the school that selected UDL we prepared a workshop that also provided an

overview of UDL was and how it was implemented in the classroom. We presented various

strategies available to make allow for more opportunities or choices within their lesson plans.

We modeled and then asked them to use one of their lesson plans to identify an area where they

could embed a UDL strategy. Once everyone had the opportunity to review their individual lesson plans, they shared with their PLC and one person from the group shared out with everyone else.

Professional Development 3 Operationalizing Positive Behavior Intervention Support or Universal Design for Learning

The third professional development was a continuance of the second. Therefore, we did not introduce any new concepts but rather expanded on what we had presented at the previous workshop. We asked the site working on UDL to bring their lesson plans and provided a handout for the schools focusing on PBIS with potential responses to their identified behaviors.

At the workshop focusing on UDL the teachers were asked to take a lesson plan to the training. Taking into account three of their diverse learners, they were asked to identify how they could incorporate various UDL strategies to meet the needs of those students. Lastly, the teachers were given the opportunity to share out with their PLCs to discuss how their lessons had integrated the two of the three components of UDL- multiple means of representation and engagement.

The schools that focused on PBIS were given an overview on how to identify the antecedent, behavior, and consequence. They practiced how to effectively describe unwanted student behavior and worked with their PLC's to identify when and how tier 2 supports should be used to promote positive behavior. This was accomplished through role playing and an activity that included the PBIS tiers along with five behaviors identified from the previous session. In their PLC's the teachers were asked to classify which tier they thought the behavior should be listed under and then we had a discussion about why certain behaviors would vary in severity based on the student's age and grade.

Professional Development 4- Inclusive Co-teaching

The last professional development workshop was designed to introduce the teachers to what co-teaching was and why it could potentially help them collaborate with one another as well as with a new teacher. Co-teaching has been defined as two credentialed teachers (i.e., general education, special education, EL specialist) working together to deliver instruction in one common space (Friend & Cook, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2018). We presented one of the new TPEs to reinforce why inclusive practices were so important for students and teachers alike. We introduced what co-teaching and inclusion were and then presented four models of co-teaching along with examples of what co-teaching was and was not. Prior to the PLCs and whole group discussion, we presented a counterstory in the form of a readers' theater regarding considerations that teachers may have before co-teaching, especially when there are various degrees of experience and expertise.

Data Sources

The following section is organized by my sources of information and the measurement tools utilized to collect the data. All of the data collected for this current study were collected as part of an ongoing project and were used to answer the research questions. Table 5 provides a brief summary of the data sources and analysis.

Table 5

Summary of Data Sources and Analyses

Data Source	Topic	Analyses	Informed
Interviews	Qualitative data related to: • Mentoring • Beliefs about successful match Beliefs about challenges associated with mentoring	In Vivo Coding Evaluation Coding Cross referenced with Survey	Research Question 2
Focus Groups	Qualitative data related to: • Professional Development o Beliefs about the challenges associated with implementation of strategies • PLCs • Co-teaching	Evaluation Coding Cross referenced with Survey	Research Question 1

Survey	A Likert-like sliding scale survey related to:
	• Assess their willingness to mentor
	• An open-ended question
	• Demographics
	  o Years teaching
	  o Credential(s)
	  o Grade level
		Descriptive Tables
		Cross referenced with the Focus Group and Interviews
			Research Question 1
			Research Question 2

Administrators

All three administrators were quite eager to get involved. The principal at School A was

receptive to the vision that the partnership team brought to the table. She had instituted the

Leader in Me program with all of the teachers and was confident that her team would rise to the

occasion. The principal at School B was selected because she was already promoting inclusive practices at her school. She worked closely with all of the teachers and would sometimes either co-teach with the teachers or model lessons for them. Although the principal at School C was in her first year of principalship at that particular school she had already begun to encourage her teachers to work with student teachers. Additionally, as an alumnus of the university and a former special education teacher she was excited to collaborate with the partnership team.

Interviews. All three principals were interviewed and asked a series of semi-structured questions. The interviews consisted of nine questions that related to their perceptions of mentorship and partnership (see Appendix A). The interviews were designed to get a sense of how they would identify and support mentor teachers. Additionally, the interviews allowed the principals offer their insights into what they considered to be good mentors. All of the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and stored on a password protected computer.

Focus groups. As described in Figure 3, the principals participated in two distinct focus groups. Each focus group was conducted on two separate occasions at one of the three schools. The first focus group included all three principals along with two assistant principals, whereas at the second focus group there were only the two principals (from schools A and B) and the assistant principal (from school C). The focus group questions were developed by the partnership team and the discussions were recorded and led by half of the team. The questions related to how the principals perceived their teachers' willingness to collaborate, meet the needs of all of their students, and gauge the types of supports and structures that the school had in place to support student learning. Since both focus group sessions were conducted simultaneously, the focus group of principals was led by the other university representative while the district team

members took copious notes. After each focus group, the notes were combined with the audio

transcription and stored on a password secured computer (see Appendix B).

Teachers

There was a total of 76 teachers who participated in at least one part of the study. As a

result of the looming teacher strike, the teachers were not always as readily willing to participate

in all aspects of the study and therefore the N varied throughout the measures. Rather than

looking at what the teachers were missing, we opted to focus on what they knew, were

comfortable with and where they would like to grow as professionals. Taking that approach

allowed us to listen to them and cater the topics of discussion to their specific wants and needs.

Interviews. A total of nine teachers participated in semi-structured interviews which

were all recorded, transcribed, and stored on a password protected computer. Similar to the

principals, the focus was on mentorship. The teachers were recruited by their principals and the

interviews lasted thirty to fifty minutes in duration. Each school included one general education

teacher who taught at the primary level K-3, one from the upper grades 4-5, and one special

education teacher (see Table 6). Six of the nine interviews took place in the teachers' classroom

and three of them took place in a room within the main office. The interviews were brief and

consisted of seven questions (see Appendix A). Since three of the nine teachers were currently

working with student teachers, the team did not want to overwhelm them by conducting a

lengthy interview. The questions varied in their nature: some were reflective, while other

questions asked the teachers about the current systems in place and what they would like to see

in an ideal partnership. For example, one of the questions asked how they would like to see the

mentor teacher/student teacher experience structured and supported? Another question asked

them to describe some of the opportunities and challenges in mentoring student teachers. The

responses from the teacher interviews were utilized to answer the second research question as well as to craft a composite counterstory. The counterstory was then converted into a reader's theater script and shared with the teachers at all three sites as part of the professional development sessions (see Appendix G).

Table 6

Interview Participant Demographics

Name	Credential	Grade	Years Teaching	School Site
Carol	Multiple Subject	1st	21	A
Val	Multiple Subject	5th	20	A
Ana	Special Education	SDC	12	A
Jenny	Multiple Subject	4th	35	B
Norma	Multiple Subject	1st	22	B
Maria	Special Education	RSP	20 (18 Gen Ed/2 SPED)	B
Julie	Multiple Subject	2nd	23	C
Berta	Special Education	RSP	20	C
Andrea	Multiple Subject	6th	16	C

Note. Participants were all assigned a pseudonym.

Focus groups. The teacher focus group was led by me and the other two district representatives. I facilitated while they took notes. Similar to the principals' interviews the focus groups took place at two of the three sites on two separate occasions, as described in Figure 3. Due to the potential strike though, the teachers from School C opted to not participate in the first focus group. Therefore, the first focus group was comprised of teachers from School A and B. The second focus group took place in a teacher lounge; three teachers from each school

38

participated (see Table 7). Teachers were asked questions related the trainings they had received by the team, the types of strategies the teachers found most effective, and where they turned to for additional support (see Appendix B). The first focus group lasted one hour whereas the second one lasted an hour and a half. The teachers were paid overtime by the district Division of Special Education. The notes and audio recordings were later transcribed and stored on a password secure computer. Only the data from the second focus group were included in the current analysis.

Table 7

Focus Group Participant Demographics

Name	Teaching Area	School Site
Mona	General Education	A
Alex	Special Education	A
Patty	General Education	A
Maria	Special Education	B
Julianna	Special Education	B
Rio	Special Education	B
Lexi	General Education	C
Ceci	General Education	C
Sol	Special Education	C

Note. Participants were all assigned a pseudonym.

Survey. At the conclusion of the final professional development all of the teachers in attendance were asked to complete a 34-question survey. A total of 72 teachers participated in the survey and it took teachers approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey.

The complete survey included 8 sections: (a) teacher demographics (i.e., years of experience and their current school site), (b) experiences with students with disabilities, (c) familiarity with co-teaching, (d) universal design for learning, (e) positive behavior support

39

programs, (f) English learners support programs, (g) individualized strategies for students with IEPs, and (h) reflections on training (see Appendix C). These eight categories emerged from the first phase of the study and the previously collected qualitative data. For the purpose of the current study, however, only the sections related to teacher demographics, experiences with students with disabilities, and reflections on trainings were drawn upon. For example, using a response range of 1 (not at all successful) to 4 (I do not have experience in supporting this group of learners) teachers were asked "During the times that students with disabilities are included in general education classes, how successful do you consider your current instructional model in meeting their academic and social needs?"

University Faculty

The university faculty is working diligently across divisions to improve student outcomes regarding their teacher preparation programs. In 2018, a new undergraduate option was introduced to help students earn a dual credential. As part of that effort, the university faculty have written courses that are cross divisional and address the TPEs. Furthermore, the faculty are looking to the three schools as potential clinical sites where students could complete a residency during their last year of the program. Therefore, it is imperative that the university faculty develop and sustain a meaningful partnership with the principals and teachers. The success of the partnership is also dependent on how the university will provide ongoing professional development opportunities to the teachers so that they have the capacity and self-efficacy to mentor teachers in training.

Interviews. Currently teacher preparation is divided up between two divisions, Special Education and Counseling and Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), so both department chairs were interviewed. In addition, the Office of Student Services (OSS) helps C&I place student

teachers at local schools to complete their directed student teaching, so the director of OSS was also interviewed. Each of the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and they were asked seven questions about their process of selecting fieldwork sites and mentor teachers (see Appendix A).

Analyses (Third Phase)

This data analyses consisted of a sequential process that builds off of the initial needs' assessment administered at all three school sites. Creswell (2013) described the data analysis process through a data analysis spiral. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) argue that sequential analysis requires iterations of data collection and reanalysis to advance and improve findings for future research. This phase of the study has allowed the partnership team and other stakeholders to revisit the effectiveness of the professional development trainings as well as their future directions (Miles et al., 2014). The data were used to understand contextual factors that could potentially influence teachers' ability to meet the needs of all their students and mentor teachers in training (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). This section is organized by research question and analysis used to answer each question.

RQ1

I capitalized on a series of survey questions to gain a general sense of teachers' perceptions of the professional development they had received. For the close ended questions, I used SPSS to determine the mean, median and standard deviation of all the teachers combined responses. There were two sections of close ended questions. One section asked teachers about how they felt supporting students with disabilities and the other asked teachers to reflect on how the trainings affected their level of preparation to work with diverse learners and collaborate with colleagues.

To assess the types of professional development that most effectively shape a teachers' sense of self-efficacy I drew upon the focus group data. More specifically, I utilized evaluation coding, which has been described by Saldaña (2016) and Miles et al. (2014) as a method that allows one to assign judgements about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy. This coding strategy was employed to gain a better insight into the types of supports teachers need to increase their sense of self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners.

To give me specific details about which parts of the training were most helpful, I analyzed the open-ended survey question in two steps. First, responses were inserted into Word It Out, an online tool that creates a word cloud based on the inserted text (see Appendix E). The word cloud that was populated allowed me to assess which aspects of the professional development resonated with the teachers. Next, using an excel spreadsheet, I coded and charted the responses to create a table of the key responses (see Appendix D1). Once the responses were put into categories, they were organized into a histogram chart to illustrate the strategies teachers found most helpful throughout the professional development trainings.

RQ2

To answer the second research question, I heavily relied on the responses from the interviews. The questions for each group were developed to provide teachers and administrators alike the opportunity share their thoughts and ideas with colleagues who they may not otherwise have the opportunity to interact with (Bazeley, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Again, I used evaluation coding as described and discussed earlier to create a comparative table to find codes that emerge from the various interviews.

Drawing upon responses to one of the survey questions, *would you be willing to mentor a student teacher?* I ran a frequency table. From that table I was able to identify how likely

teachers were to want to work with student teachers if given the opportunity. The data was then categorized by school site.

Making Connections

Once I constructed categories, the next step was to connect them with the Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model. I followed four steps Miles et al. (2014) recommended to establish "conceptual 'additions' to the observed data to make them applicable more broadly" (p. 293). This process involved first identifying distinct findings described in the earlier sections. Then I related the findings to one another designating patterns which then allowed me to determine the corresponding construct. Using an inductive process permitted me to make connections between the categories that emerged as well as the constructs within the model (see Figure 1).

Summary

The present chapter has described how my positionality informed the present study. I have described how a partnership between a university and school district emerged over the course of the two years. Once I provided the context for the study, I introduced the data sources that were employed. Each source was described with a subsection about how it specifically related to the participants. The analytic procedures were outlined in detail for each of the research questions including how the data was categorized to conceptualize the Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model. The next chapter will present the key findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The teachers' needs and interests were explored throughout every phase of the study and indeed guided each iteration of the study. For example, based upon the findings of the first phase, a series of professional developments were developed and then introduced as part of the professional development and PLCs providing opportunities for the participating teachers to share their insights, concerns, and ideas. In order to inform the field about the complexities associated with providing professional development to veteran teachers, an Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model (Anderson et la., 2014) incorporating the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) construct (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) was utilized. As suggested by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) the data was analyzed in response to each research question. Accordingly, this chapter is organized by research questions.

Teacher Feelings about Professional Development

Upon completing the four professional development trainings, all of the teachers were asked to complete a 15-minute survey. Approximately two weeks later, a smaller group from each school site were asked to participate in a focus group. Both the survey and focus group gave teachers a platform to share their thoughts, experiences, and preparedness to work with diverse learners. The first research question was, *"How do general education and special education teachers experience professional development related to inclusion focused on working with diverse learners?"* Two of the survey questions that teachers completed were related to their personal perceptions about working with diverse learners. The following section describes what teachers reported during the focus group and potentially explains the teachers' responses to the close ended survey questions.

Tables 8 and 9 report the number of responses and percentages for each question. When teachers were asked how successful their current instructional model was with meeting the needs of diverse learners 60.5% reported that they felt moderately successful (see Table 8). More specifically, when they were asked about working with particular groups of students with disabilities, teachers felt most prepared working with students who were culturally and linguistically diverse. Whereas, over 50% of them only felt somewhat prepared to work with students who had Autism, Physical Impairments or Intellectual Disabilities (see Table 9). For tables that provide the means, medians, and standard deviations of how successful teachers considered their current instructional model in meeting students with disabilities, academic and social needs and how prepared teachers felt to meet the needs of students based on descriptors, please refer to Appendix D2 and D3.

Table 8

Current Instructional Model in Meeting Diverse Learners Academic and Social Needs

	Academic Needs		*Social Needs*	
Level of Success	*N*	*Percent*	*N*	*Percent*
Not at all Successful	1	1.3	-	-
Moderately Successful	46	60.5	42	55.3
Very Successful	22	28.9	22	28.9
N/A I do not have experience supporting this group of learners	6	7.9	5	6.6

Note. Participants did not respond to all of the options, so the *N* varies between academic and social needs.

Table 9

Teachers' Feelings of Preparation when Working with Particular Subgroups of Diverse Learners

Descriptor	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse		Students with Autism		Physical Impairments		Intellectual Disabilities	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Not Prepared	-	-	12	15.8	8	10.5	5	6.6
Somewhat Prepared	29	38.2	40	52.6	47	61.8	41	53.9
Very Prepared	45	59.2	21	27.6	16	21.1	28	36.8
N/A I do not have experience supporting this group of learners	1	1.3	1	1.3	3	3.9	-	-

Note. Participants did not respond to all of the options, so the *N* varies across descriptors.
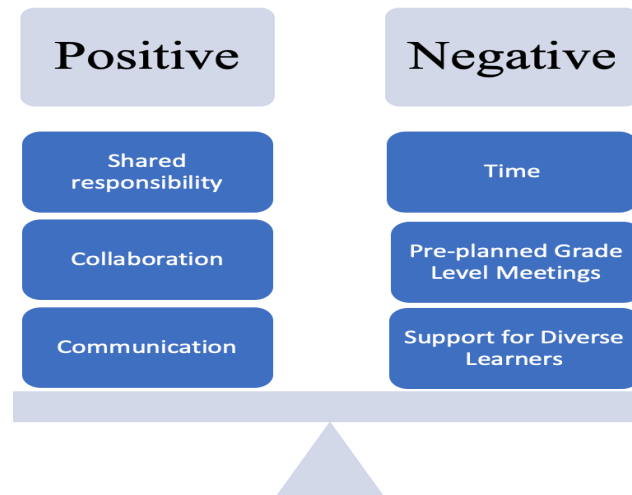
Reflecting on Practice

Throughout the focus groups, we heard scenarios about individual students, collaboration between teachers and support providers, student grouping, and specific strategies. Teachers openly shared their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about how the professional development trainings had impacted their practice and what they felt they still needed. Using plus and minus signs to denote positive and negative evaluations, as suggested by Miles et al. (2014), I was able to understand teachers' feelings in relation to having professional development. Figure 4 demonstrates the key codes that derived from the evaluation coding. The next couple of sections illustrate how those feelings, both positive and negative, related to PPCT in relation to teachers' self-perception when working with diverse learners in an inclusive setting.

Figure 4

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

Positive	Negative
Shared responsibility	Time
Collaboration	Pre-planned Grade Level Meetings
Communication	Support for Diverse Learners

Positive Aspects

Educators who participated in the focus group represented both general and special education. They were all veteran teachers with the exception of one special education teacher who was in her first year of teaching. Teachers were asked questions such as: *"During the professional development, what did you learn from working in your professional learning community with your colleagues? PROBE: What is something you would like to learn more about in the future?"* While the principals were asked *"Have you and the teachers been able to talk about the professional development trainings that have been presented? PROBE: As a faculty or with a leadership team? If yes, what was the outcome? If not, why?"*

Communication and Collaboration. The topic that most commonly surfaced was the ability to engage in dialogue about best practice and addressing students' needs. Both communication and collaboration were frequently mentioned by the principals and teachers alike. For example, Lexi, a general education teacher noted:

47

"Anytime you get to collaborate it is an opportunity for learning. Even now we are

gaining a lot from the conversation. Like to hear what is working so we could try it. It's

like having a mentor. We gain so much more when the special education teachers are

included in the full group."

Mona, another general education teacher added that by working together with special education

teachers they were able to gain access to more resources. She shared, "*Everyone has a lot of*

resources. PLCs are the only time we get to share ideas." Time for sharing ideas was echoed in

both conversations. As noted in Table 11, at the conclusion of the professional development

trainings, the teachers felt better prepared to collaborate with colleagues who had different areas

of expertise.

     Shared Responsibility. Overwhelmingly, the teachers and administrators agreed that

working together across credentials had improved the motivation and morale. Sol, a special

education teacher, the time to meet with her PLC during the professional development trainings

gave her the opportunity to not only check in, but to also "*combine ideas*". "*The workshops were*

kind of like my backbone when I talk to General Ed Teachers," exclaimed Maria. Her comment

had evoked a lively discourse. After she shared her thoughts, the group quickly began to chime

in, they strategies they had either implemented or changed to help students access the Core

Content since the PDs begun. This was further validated in the administrator focus group. The

when they were asked about the cross-credential collaborations that had been transpiring in the

trainings, the administrator from School C shared that she was beginning to notice teachers

"moving from I can't, to what are we going to do?" Although both groups had witnessed growth

since the implementation of the trainings, they acknowledged that there continued to be several

challenges regarding being able to successfully collaborate and work together.

Challenges

From beginning to the end of the focus groups, there were instances when participants would share the obstacles related to their ability to enact what they were being presented with during the professional developments. Time surfaced as one of the biggest challenges. Two other equally important factors that emerged as obstacles were grade level meetings and flexibility. These codes were vital because they shed light on the types of supports and professional development that could empower and improve teachers' overall instruction.

Time. Teachers and administrators alike noted that time was a barrier. The special education teachers, in particular felt the pressures associated with time. Valeria shared "*I have to hunt teachers down*" Sol added *"we need the time, but we don't have it."* Yet Juliana, another special education teacher, noted *"I could choose which grade level I collaborate with, but I don't have the time to collaborate with them."* The three administrators shared that time was barrier for their team. When asked to reflect on talking with teachers about professional development or some of the topics that had been presented during the trainings, one administrator openly shared that a barrier was *"time to plan, even for myself."* Another added, "*We don't have that time. Then it's always in between, in the hall, walking from point A to point B. I think that's the challenge."* Time was the overshadowing factor associated to challenges and trickled into other areas of concern such as planning, addressing challenging behaviors, and co-teaching.

Pre-Determined Grade Level Meetings. An interesting diverging perspective between the administrators and teachers that emerged were grade level meetings. Since time had been an ongoing concern at the school sites, the administrators at two of the three schools shared they instituted more grade level meetings. One shared that *"we have a format to keep them on track."* Whereas, the teachers, on the other hand, felt that the pre-determined topics kept them from

getting at what they really need to discuss. Ceci, a general education teacher noted *"the agenda we get is not set in stone but evidence of what we are planning. Sometimes we have areas outside of instruction we need to meet about; grade level needs, fieldtrips."* Unlike Juliana, the special education teacher who was able to choose which grade level she wanted to collaborate with, Sol who also teaches multiple grade levels shared that she was assigned which grade level to collaborate with during grade level meetings. She ungrudgingly expressed that she would like to talk to the different teachers about mainstreaming and what it looks like in every classroom. She shared, *"I heard the general education teachers were not prepared to receive my students. I need more time to collaborate with general education teachers about mainstreaming."*

Supporting Diverse Learners. Teachers reported that without time or formal training, an additional ongoing challenge was the ability to support diverse learners. When talking about a grade level program to rotate students throughout the various teachers, Alex, a special education teacher shared that in her experience, *"As soon as general education teacher feels our kids are too difficult, we get kicked out."* Maria, another special education teacher shared the *"school needs to reevaluate how they mainstream. Student groupings are a challenge."* A general education teacher, Ceci, chimed in *"general education teachers need more support for working with behavior needs… we need more planning time. It's easier with RSP, SDC is not as flexible."* RSP is a pull-out model where students are on the general education teachers' roster but leave the room, whereas SDC is a self-contained model, students are on the special education teachers' roster and spend limited time with their general education peers.

Administrators acknowledged the challenges for teachers to work with diverse learners, however, they all reported that they had seen more understanding about student diversity from the teachers. One administrator reported that as a result of the professional development there

was more willingness to be inclusive as well as a better understanding of diverse learners. *"Teachers understand that just because a child has autism it doesn't mean they are all alike."* Later during the conversation, she added, *the teachers got the opportunity to think about what they are doing in the classroom and what changes can be done."*

Partnership Supports

Over the course of four PDs teachers were introduced to a variety of strategies that they could potentially use in their classrooms. The administrator from School A shared that she saw more supports in place as she walked around. *"For behavior, more things are in place, even for behavior, so they can provide support differentiation for all of the students."* The principal at School C mentioned that since the implementation of the PDs, she saw more willingness on the teachers' behalf to integrate students.

During the second module, we introduced using specific strategies to address individual as and whole group classroom management strategies. As the teachers were all talking during the focus group, two of them mentioned using token boards and visual schedules with younger students. Rio, a special education teacher shared, *"Student is able to access lessons more often now. All team members are on the same page, using the same routines. Student used to elope and have meltdowns."* An upper grade special education teacher also mentioned token boards in the open-ended survey question. Token boards are typically a strategy used with individual students, but teachers shared how they could also be used with a class.

A general education teacher mentioned introducing a timer. Timers were being used by multiple teachers to manage small group rotations as well as individual student behavior. As a result of the PDs, Lexi, a general education teacher, reported having *"a student that is hyperactive, whole group was not working. I switched to small group instruction. Pulling groups*

helps the student move around so he can focus when he gets to group. It helps him access the curriculum." Teachers were eager to share the changes they had made within their classrooms. Mona noted, she was *"motivated to try new things because it is working for teammates."*

At School B, the only school focusing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the principal shared that even after the partnership team left, UDL was discussed at their staff meetings. She reported, *"they were very interested in UDL. We have done a few staff meetings now talking about it. They realized they were already using some of the strategies and didn't know it."* She reported that the partnership team served to help to *"clarify[y] UDL."*

Helpful Strategies and Professional Development. At the conclusion of the survey, there was a section that asked teachers to reflect on the professional development sessions conducted by the University and School District. As Table 10 depicts, the majority of participating teachers reported feeling somewhat (51.3%) or much more (38.2%) prepared to meet the needs of students after participating in the professional development. Table 11 provides an overview of teachers' perceptions about their level of preparation regarding collaborating with fellow teachers across areas of expertise. Upon completing the four trainings, teachers reported feeling much better (47.4%) or moderately better (38.2%) prepared to collaborate with colleagues who held different credentials.

Table 10

Level of Preparation After Professional Development

Level of Success	N	Percent
Much More	29	38.2
Somewhat More	39	51.3
About the Same	5	6.6

Somewhat less	1	1.3

Note. (*n* = 74)

Table 11

Level of Preparation to Collaborate with Teachers Across Areas of Expertise

Level of Success	*N*	*Percent*
Much Better	36	47.4
Moderately Better	29	38.2
Slightly Better	7	9.2
About the Same	2	2.6

Note. (*n* = 74)

Participants were given the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question. The question asked *which strategies presented in the professional development training were most helpful to your practice?* Not every participant responded to the question (*n* = 56), therefore there were a total of 56 responses. Of those 56, five were comments (e.g. *it was an eye-opening experience*) and were therefore excluded from the total count. Appendix E displays the word cloud that materialized when the open-ended responses were entered into the Word-It tool. Notably, the four most prominent words were strategies, behavior, co-teaching, and UDL. Appendix F illustrates a few of the open-ended survey written responses that were categorized into the five main strategies. Figure 5 shows the number of teachers who identified strategies related to (a) co-teaching and collaboration, (b) positive behavior support, (c) universal design for learning, (d) co-teaching and collaboration, positive behavior support, and Universal Design for learning, and (e) co-teaching and collaboration, and positive behavior support.

Figure 5

Helpful Strategies Presented During the Professional Development Trainings

Which strategies presented in the professional development training were most helpful to your practice?
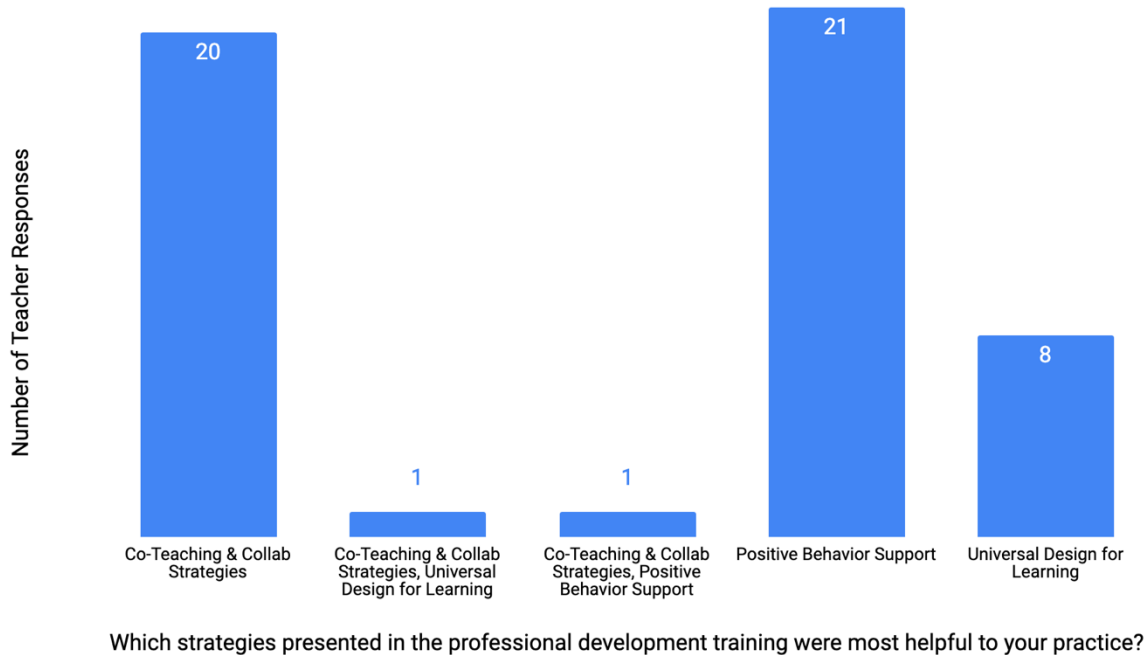
As demonstrated in above, the teachers were honest and candid in sharing their experiences and perceptions associated with the types of support and professional development they would like to expand their ability to address the needs of diverse learners. They shared that while they were welcoming of collaboration, co-planning, and even co-teaching, they would also like more autonomy to make important decisions about how to utilize their time during grade level meetings and PLCs. Consequently, they also reported that need for continuing education to remain current in a space that has intersecting abilities and cultures.

The teachers' responses to the survey questions coupled with the teacher and principal focus groups demonstrated that teachers were experiencing gains with their students as a result of the partnership. Overwhelmingly, 89.5% of teachers reported feeling *much more prepared* or *somewhat more prepared* to meet the needs of students after the professional development

trainings. Similarly, 85.6% of teachers reported feeling *much better prepared* or *moderately better prepared* to collaborate with fellow teachers across areas of expertise.

Mentoring New Teachers

A major goal of the university and school district partnership was to build a veteran teachers' capacity so that they would be able to effectively work with teachers entering the field. Thus, a second research question asked: *"What barriers and obstacles might facilitate or conversely inhibit veteran teachers' ability to mentor new teachers*?" Recognizing the implications that the macrosystem has on teaching as a whole, along with continuous changes that transpire at the mesosystem level in schools, it is imperative to understand the context in which both novice teachers and teachers in training may be entering for one of their first real teaching world experiences.

As noted earlier, the average experience of the teachers at each of the schools was roughly 20 years. That said, the teachers at these three sites have seen their fair share of policy changes and were hired during different circumstances. To address the demands of the changing student demographics, teachers need to be able to work with a diverse range of students. Throughout the interviews, the teachers, and administrators shared their perceptions and experiences working with universities and student teachers. They shared their own personal experience as well as what they consider to be challenges and obstacles with mentoring young educators.

University Support

Teacher preparation programs are primarily concerned with helping teacher candidates get through all of the program and state benchmarks to earn their teaching credential. As part of the state requirements, candidates are required by the state to complete a copious amount of

fieldwork hours. Therefore, the university has to identify qualified partners where students could complete their fieldwork experiences. The representative from the Office of Student Services, reported that schools are typically selected through a combination of strategies. He mentioned four in particular 1) faculty recommending new sites; 2) existing contracts in place; 3) mentor teachers change schools; and 4) selecting schools that are geographically feasible for the candidates. One division chair noted that their department had a preferred process. She said, they *"have a list from an informal network of faculty contacts, such as former students and administrators."* That same chair also added that because of teacher and administrator school site movement, *"sustaining relationships over time is challenging."*

In terms of actually supporting mentor teachers, all three university representatives shared that they request that the mentor teachers watch eight-hour training video modules provided by the California Council for Teacher Educators on topics such as universal design for learning, multi-tiered systems of support, direct instruction, and co-teaching. Additionally, they all noted that they provide mentor teachers with a handbook. According to one of the two Division Chairs, *"if there's a problem, the student teacher goes to the university supervisor. The university supervisor and chair meet. The university supervisor then implements action."* For the university, the designated university supervisor is the bridge between the mentor teacher and the program. The university relies on the university supervisor and administrator to work with the mentor teacher.

Administrator Support

Similar to the university personnel, the participating administrators reported wanting the most qualified teachers to work with new teachers or candidates. Specifically, two of the three principals mentioned encouraging the teachers who were Nationally Board-Certified teachers to

be mentor teachers. They felt that those teachers were the most prepared and best qualified. All three shared that the ideal mentor teachers should know and be able to integrate Common Core standards into their daily lessons. Furthermore, they expressed a desire for mentor teachers to be able to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery.

The principal from School B shared that she had very clear expectations when selecting mentor teachers. During her interview, she commented that *"at sign up, teachers know the expectations and requirements… What are you going to offer as a mentor teacher?"* She would develop a list of teachers who were interested and then continue her selection process. She shared that she gave preference to the teachers who went to trainings, and keep themselves current in the field, and who were not doing it for the money.

When it came to supporting mentor teachers, each of the three administrators had their own ideas about working with the university to support mentor teachers. Two of the administrators had previous experience working with student teachers while the third one did not. Additionally, the administrator at School C was a graduate of the same teacher preparation program, so they were very familiar with the university. The principal at School B had some previous experience working with the university at various times throughout their principalship. For the administrator who was an alumna of the program, she saw mentorship as a way to *"give back."* The other principal saw it as an opportunity for mentor teachers to have additional support to meet the students' needs. The principal at School A, who did not have any prior experience, had ideas for supporting mentor teachers, such as creating opportunities to ensure that candidates and mentor teachers were compatible.

Teachers' Ability and Willingness to Mentor

Although all of the participating teachers were not individually asked what the potential

barriers and obstacles were in mentoring student teachers, there was a close-ended survey

question that asked if they would be willing to mentor student teachers. A total of 76 participants

responded to the question. 56.6% said they were not interested in mentoring a student teacher

and 43.4% said they would. The Figure 6 depicts the teachers' willingness to mentor student

teachers by school site. At School C, 52.4 % of the teachers were willing to work with student

teachers. Whereas only 35.3 and 47.6 % of the teachers were willing to be mentors at Schools A

and B respectively.

Figure 6

Teachers' Willingness to Mentor Student Teachers
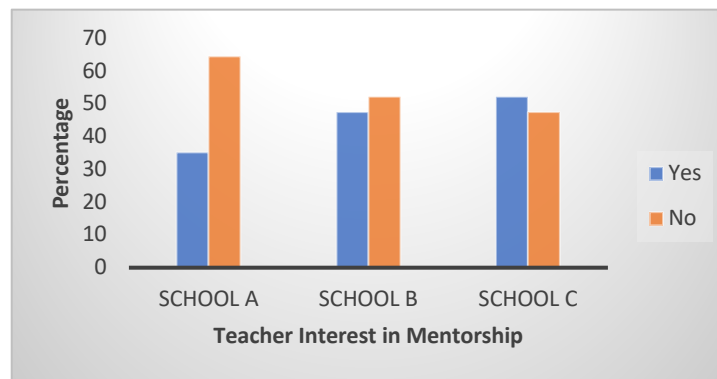
The following section presents what the teachers who were interviewed shared regarding

mentorship.

Challenges to Mentorship

Needing Direction and Guidance

Although the university has some steps in place to ensure that mentor teachers understand

the expectations, teachers who had previous experience with teacher candidates, reported they

were unclear about the program standards. Without clear expectations and guidance from the

university, mentoring new teachers could be too much of a burden. Berta, a special education

teacher shared "*I don't know the ground rules*". During another interview, Val, a general education teacher, commented that she "*want to know what the expectations are, if I can't do it, I'd rather give someone else the opportunity.*" Only one of the teachers interviewed made any reference to the videos. Norma, a general education teacher, shared *"the videos aren't very clear at the beginning of the semester."* Norma added that the university should give the teachers more notice about who they would be working with as well as more training.

One sentiment shared by the administrators and teachers was that the university supervisors did not always understand the school culture or the instructional demands inside of the classroom. Consequently, the teacher candidates sometimes looked stressed and overwhelmed. More upsetting to the mentor teachers was that they personally did not understand the teacher performance expectations (TPEs) or teaching performance assessment that the candidates were required to successfully complete before they were granted their credential. Julie, a general education teacher, expressed her concern by stating:

> *They need to realize that this isn't another class that they are taking. This is going to be their profession, their career. So, they need to take it more seriously rather than 'this is just a class' because I have had student teachers who have, you know, don't show up or do what I ask them to do.*

Their concerns relating to guidance and direction led to other obstacles, such as interpersonal relationships. A result of unclear guidance and expectations had left teachers, who had mentored in the past, feeling unsupported when they had a problem with a student teacher.

The mentor teacher who was upset, was not only frustrated with the university structure, but also with their current student teacher. Their comment unveiled that there was either a breakdown in communication between the mentor and candidate or that the candidate was not taking the

fieldwork seriously. Since the candidate was not interviewed a conclusion could not be drawn in this particular instance. Although, that same mentor teacher as well as others reported that more guidance and direction could improve the interpersonal relationships between the candidates and their assigned mentor.

Personalities

Throughout the interviews, the administrators and teachers noted that personalities are a critical component in a being a successful mentor. The administrator who did not have any previous experience supporting mentor teachers was a strong proponent of connecting candidates and mentor teachers in advance to ensure they had a shared vision. Similarly, eight of the nine teachers interviewed expressly mentioned the importance of trust and communication. For example, Jenny, a general education teacher shared*, "the student teacher should be able to share what they are afraid of, scared, I'm confused- confide in us."* Berta, the one teacher who did not explicitly talk about the importance of trust or communication between a student teacher and a mentor teacher divulged that she personally observed *"where there is a conflict of personalities and they have difficulties and they don't always agree (laughing)."* Berta, who made that particular remark, was a special education teacher and reported never had an onsite mentee. She did, however, have previous experience working with district interns at other school sites, so they never had to share their space or teaching load with someone else.

Mentoring teachers includes imparting knowledge as well as giving up absolute control of your classroom. "*As with anything, you'll hope personalities will match up because you spend quite a bit of time with the person",* reported Julie who had student teachers for 23 years at that particular school. Along the same lines, Val shared, *"I need someone who is open-minded. A student teacher should not be very sensitive to feedback."* The teachers in this study wanted to

60

help, but they also understood the pressure that student teachers are under. Jenny, a general

education teacher, noted it's *"hard to say things to someone- give feedback, second-guessing. I*

want you to not second-guess yourself, don't put yourself down." Trusting relationships are not

easy to develop and do not always happen overnight. Even teachers who wanted to *"pay it*

forward" felt pressured by the demands to have their own students ready for state testing and

were not sure they were able to handle the demands of being a mentor teacher.

Added Responsibilities

The principals, well aware of the policies in place, shared that they tried to prepare

teachers by sharing the expectations associated with mentorship, Julie reported *"if there are a lot*

of additional requirements on the mentor teachers, then it would be a little more difficult."

During the interviews, teachers asked questions such as the one asked by Val, **"***How much*

paperwork is involved, who is supervising me? Who will give us feedback? A lot of paperwork-

*No thanks!***"** Teachers did not mind the added training, consultations, or meetings, but the

paperwork was a potential deal breaker.

Summary

This chapter illuminated the overarching themes and challenges that teachers encounter

regarding professional development for inclusion and mentoring new teachers. Inclusive

education is influenced by policy, which also influences both professional development and

teacher morale. Needless to say, reciprocity transpires between professional development, a

teachers' morale, and their ability to address the diverse learning needs of their students.

Mentoring new teachers, while rewarding for some teachers, was perceived as a burden for

others because of the added workload or not knowing the expectations.

CHAPTER V: Discussion

Before a plane takes off, a flight attendant typically walks passengers through the procedures they should follow in case of an emergency. They recommend that adults secure their air masks before those of the younger passengers. The same could be said for veteran teachers who are attempting to meet the diverse learning needs of students and potentially even mentor new teachers. Veteran teachers need to be secure in their own practice before they assist someone else. In other words, teachers need to have their grounding before they could help someone thrive. As policies and new evidence-based practices emerge, teachers currently in the field need to understand what the expectations look like in praxis. Accordingly, teacher preparation programs should strive to produce mentors who are not only current in evidence-based practices but who also understand the expectations that are put forth on teachers just entering the field.

Slee (2018), a leading scholar in the field of Disability Studies and inclusive education, called "for better theory and practice in the area of social policy" in relation to inclusive education (p.14). The present study elaborates on the earlier work of scholars Anderson and colleagues (2014) who employed Bronfenbrenner's original Ecological Systems Model of Development to guide the field in understanding inclusive education. Using the data collected during a collaborative action research project, I revisited Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005) later iteration of the model. I have introduced the four components process-person-context-time (PPCT) proposed by Bronfenbrenner and Morris to reconceptualize Anderson and colleagues' model. The findings from the current study illustrate how the Expanded Bioecological Model for Inclusive Education could help explain the impact that social policy, in relation to inclusive education, has on teachers practice and therefore their

willingness to mentor new teachers. This chapter makes connections between the expanded

model that I have introduced and the lived experiences of teachers at three school sites.

Teachers' Ability to Address the Needs of Diverse Learners

The model (see Appendix H) proposed by Anderson et al. (2014) offered an array of

general factors that could be integral within each system of Bronfenbrenner's original model.

The expanded model (see Figure 1) converges how professional development, teacher morale,

and policy all work in concert to help the field understand the complexities associated with

inclusive education.

A teachers' ability to teach diverse learners stems from their interconnectedness of how

their own proximal processes are influenced by the context. The context related to inclusive

education for a teacher is all encompassing. It has been described as a system of complex

relationships that a developing individual has within their immediate context described as the

microsystem (Anderson et al., 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The microsystem would be the

curriculum, resources, classroom culture, and playground (Anderson et al., 2014). The flow of a

classroom is affected by the way the teacher works with the students. Classroom interactions

between the teacher and students are influenced by school practices as well as how the teacher

organizes the space and flow within their room. The mesosystem is crucial because it is where

universities and school district could work together to address the needs and concerns of teachers

as well as inform the exosystem. The mesosystem amplifies how the context, time, and processes

should be considered when planning professional developments. The exosystem, is typically the

structures that seek to align the microsystem with the macrosystem. The leadership structure as

well as the patterns of authority are embedded within the exosystem. The outermost system is the

macrosystem. It includes the district or state mandates and policies that a teacher must adhere to

in order to remain in good standing. It is also the system closest to the driving force within the model- policies.

Majority of the teachers in the study had over 10 years of experience, and each school was comprised of 75% general education teachers and 25% special education teachers. It is not uncommon for school credentialed teachers to be distributed in that manner. The number of students who have an individual education plan (IEP) dictates the number of special education teachers per site. If teachers are expected to collaborate across credentials, then it leaves one special education teacher working with two to three grade levels that have anywhere from two to four teachers per level. If students are evenly distributed between the class assignments, that means that special education teachers have to identify time to ensure that all of the students' academic needs are being met in the general education setting. Moreover, because they are responsible for the IEP, they also have to monitor the data collected to report their progress. The findings in this study illustrated that being a special education teacher is a labor of love. Compared to their colleagues in the general education setting, they are typically responsible for managing multiple grade level content while addressing the individualized academic and social needs of their students.

Dudley-Marling and Burns (2014) presented two distinct views on inclusion- a deficit stance and a social constructivist perspective. These two perspectives are informed by the proximal processes that a person experiences over time. The proximal processes include the psychological, social, cultural experiences, and biological factors, which influence the behaviors and development of people and those they encounter, hence reciprocity (Trummer, 2017). The proximal processes are an essential component of the model (see Figure 1). They are shaped by a series of interdependent interactions over time that directly impact a teachers' ability to embrace

and implement inclusive education. During the focus groups and interviews general education and special education teachers both shared their fair share of needs and wants. Moreover, the partnership team were striving to increase the capacity of teachers whose own preparation, because of their years in the classroom, was most likely grounded in a deficit stance towards including students with diverse learning needs in the general education classroom.

Teachers' Needs and Wants from Partnership

Walton et al. (2014) posited that to work in inclusive settings workshops alone would not suffice. They recommended systemic support for teachers who are currently in the field as well as better preparation for pre-service teachers. Throughout the various conversations with teachers, it became transparent that teachers felt they needed more guidance about how to support diverse learners. Alex's comment stood out because in her experience, as a special education teacher, a general education teachers' inability to address challenging behaviors often led to exclusionary practices. Vaughn et al. (2018) suggested that miscommunication coupled with low expectations for diverse learners often leads to more negative interactions which is likely to result in more unwanted student behaviors. Furthermore, when Thibodeaux et al. (2015) surveyed 212 K-12 public school teachers, they found that one of the biggest reasons' teachers left the profession was associated with student discipline. Not only did teachers express a desire for more support related with managing behavior, but earlier studies on teacher attrition have found that student discipline is a leading factor in leaving the field.

Through the partnership, teachers at schools A and C were presented with two modules that focused on positive behavior intervention support (PBIS). Lexi, who had received that training, shared that adjusting her instructional model improved student behavior. After surveying teachers across K-12 grade levels, Gonzalez et al. (2017) found that as teacher stress

increased, teacher motivation decreased. That was a critical finding to note because the contrary was apparent throughout the course of this project. As teachers shared their accomplishments, their sense of morale and positive statements increased. For example, teachers reported that hearing their colleagues share positive experiences about implementing the strategies presented in the trainings was affirming and motivating. Flores and Day (2006) further validate the need for a positive teaching environment by suggesting that the way contextual, cultural and biographical interact with one another impact teacher praxis.

To keep morale up, teachers need to know that they are making a difference, they need affirmation. Thibodeaux and colleagues (2015) as well as the Learning Policy Institute (2016) found that lack of leadership was another major factor for leaving the field prematurely. All three school sites in the present study had administrators who were supportive in one way or another. School C, for example, had the highest number of teachers who were interested in mentoring. That school, in particular, had the mindset that they were giving back to the community. The principal was a strong believer in giving back to the community and emphasized that with the teachers at her school. All of the teachers who were interviewed from that particular school made a reference to giving back to the community. Whereas the principal at School A adopted the motto "Thinkers, Leaders, and Change Makers." When the teachers at her site were interviewed, they emphasized communication and collaboration. The administrators at each of these sites had not been there as long as the teaching staff, regardless it was apparent that their leadership style influenced teacher motivation.

A want that teachers shared during the focus group, was more autonomy regarding how they utilized their planning and instructional time. They reported that during grade level meetings, they were given specific tasks or forms to complete. Being told how to spend their

time did not sit well with teachers and they felt pressured about how to use their planning time. Interestingly both Thibodeaux et al. (2015) and the Learning Policy Institute (2016) reported that lack of autonomy is another leading factor in teacher attrition. Unlike the findings in earlier studies, grade level meetings were not a deterrent for the teachers at these particular schools. Although, it should be noted that similar to other teachers, lack of autonomy was a factor in teacher dissatisfaction. It was not the grade level meetings that teachers were unhappy about, but rather having to complete specific tasks were unsettling. In fact, teachers reported that they were pleased the partnership trainings because they were given time to reflect, talk, and share their ideas.

What Teachers Gained from the Partnership

As demonstrated by Wolfberg et al. (2009) partnerships between districts and universities could help ease the tension teachers experience when trying to meet the needs of all their students, but in particular their diverse learners. The findings from this study provide evidence that partnerships have the potential penetrate through the various systems to bolster teacher morale as well as build their capacity. An ongoing partnership such as the one in this study started by learning about the teachers' needs. Then by working closely with the principals we learned about the mesosystem structure and school norms. Taking those steps prior to introducing the four modules allowed the team to understand the school context as well as build trust with the school leadership team. While teachers had experience working with their grade level, they had not worked with teachers from other grade levels. At our first training with School A, the teachers were all seated at tables according to their grade level in the cafeteria. The next time we met with them, they had transitioned into a classroom space and the teachers were mixed. Throughout the collaboration, there were observable differences in the exosystem.

During each of the four trainings, teachers were first presented with strategies and then given the opportunity to talk about what they were currently doing in their classrooms. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provided the teachers with a space to openly collaborate with one another about their students, their instructional practices, and their concerns. In the present study, the teachers repeatedly expressed their approval of working together. In an open-ended response, a general education teacher reported *"I think looking at each other's strengths and weaknesses and observing how we can complement each other is a worthwhile strategy."* Although the trainings were developed by the partnership team, I was insistent that we give teachers the opportunity to highlight their strengths, acknowledging that they are on the frontlines. As outsiders, we could provide the tools and what the strategies should look like, but they were the ones who were implementing the strategies and working with the students. Our job was to get them to revisit their current practice, to identify room for growth, and to explore new ways to engage their students.

One activity worth noting took place during the second module related to PBIS. The teachers were asked to anonymously write a challenging behavior they were currently experiencing in their classroom. Then, they put their responses in a bag. Later during that same training, they were asked to randomly select a card. We gave them a few minutes to write how they would respond to that particular behavior and then asked them to share with their PLC. Giving them challenges that their colleagues had written personalized the scenarios. Asking them to not write their name on the cards allowed them to candidly share their concerns or thoughts without feeling judged. Some of the conversations got teachers talking about developmentally appropriate behavior. In their conversations, we heard some of them talk about how they were

using or wanted to try a specific strategy to address a challenging behavior. Some even talked about external factors that might need to be considered before they decided the next steps.

The partnership team brought two levels of expertise that teachers. A response from a general education teacher to the open-ended question highlighted the willingness to try multiple strategies. *"Going over various strategies from UDL and the many voices of the facilitation team were incredibly helpful."*

Allowing the teachers to problem solve together and build from their prior knowledge, increased their level of buy in. A general education teacher from School B shared, *"most of the strategies were helpful especially on how to try different ones if the ones implemented do not work."* In an experiment with teacher candidates, Van Laarhoven and colleagues (2007) found that the group who were able to practice the with students at a clinical site believed that strategies and methods (instructional accommodations) were feasible to implement, whereas the control group did not.

In Australia, Betlem et al. (2019) did a similar inquiry to the present study. Their team contextualized a professional development model between a university and school district with mentor-teachers. While the design was similar, they only worked with teachers who were already designated as teacher-mentors. Moreover, their study was done in Australia, not within the context of the United States. Nonetheless, their findings were similar. "A contextualized professional development model can include opportunities for participation in professional sharing and dialogue, improved communication, and interpersonal skills, enhanced leadership skills and a sense of professional contribution to the growth and development of others" (Betlem et al., 2019, p. 344).

How Teachers' Needs, Wants, and Gains Are Shaped by Policy

The impetus of this partnership were curricular changes at the university, changes from the state regarding teacher preparation, and a local initiative regarding student placement. When the stakeholders initially met, it did not take long to affirm that they all had an invested interest in working together. While they had good intentions, the project emerged from a need to build teacher capacity to eventually implement state and local level initiatives. That said, this current study as well as earlier studies indicate that teachers' time and instructional practices are in one way or another driven by district and state policies (Brown, 2015; Esposito et al., 2018). Which is a major reason that makes teachers feel that they are not always afforded the time or space to reflect and collaborate (Tiwari et al., 2015).

The findings have highlighted how the macrosystem impacts the proximal processes between people, power, the context, and time. Teachers concerns during the interviews and focus group echoed Narain's (2014) findings, which suggested that without the opportunity to reflect and collaborate on a regular basis inclusive practices become one more burden. That coupled with the current instructional model at all three school sites, which are exclusionary by nature, hindered the teachers' interest in co-teaching and even mentoring. Teachers tend to work with colleagues who either hold the same credential or teach the same grade level. While that is great, it excludes the special education teachers who are left to "hunt teachers down."

Theoharis et al. (2016) argued that when students are tracked and grouped by ability or achievement it is a disservice to all. To combat that practice, throughout the partnership, the aim was to give teachers the tools so that they could be equipped and willing to work with colleagues who held different credentials. Notably, teachers found collaborating across credentials to be a valuable practice. Their reason for not collaborating with across credentials, however, was because of the lack of time. The school assistant principal from School C shared *"we have*

conversations in the hall. Flexibility has come through." Time was a factor that forced teachers to get creative if they wanted to meet the needs of their students. Since teachers could not be in multiple places at one time, it is imperative that general education teachers also familiarize themselves with frameworks such as UDL and PBIS. Knowing how to effectively use evidence-based practices benefits all students because if they are implemented with fidelity, they reduce the likelihood of referring students for special education services. Hence, if the expectation is for teachers to meet the needs of all their students, then there is a greater need for more cross institutional collaboration to support teachers and to keep them current.

Teachers' Willingness to Mentor

To address the second aim of the partnership, this study sought to learn what factors might contribute to a teachers' willingness to mentor teacher candidates. The responses on the survey indicated that only 43.4% of the 76 teachers were willing to mentor a student teacher. That less than half of the teachers expressing an interest in mentoring was alarming. It was alarming because earlier studies have suggested that mentoring programs led to higher levels of satisfaction and retention for teachers (Ponte & Twomey, 2014; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). If they themselves were new teachers at one point, then why would they not want to support teachers who were just starting out? The teachers who were interviewed in the present study noted potential barriers in not wanting to commit to mentoring new teachers. The most evident were the unclear expectations from the university, personalities, and having too many other daily responsibilities.

It was noteworthy that schools in the present study were not plagued with the constant struggle of hiring unqualified teachers, however, that further convoluted our efforts. Since majority of all of the teachers were considered veterans in the field, with over five years of

experience, they were set in their current practices. That means that even after the training, some of the teachers might not have been receptive to mentoring because it meant embracing the new Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE) and all the additional obligations that are associated with mentoring a teacher candidate.

A Disjointed Vision

The reoccurring barriers and obstacles shared by the teachers corresponded to the proximal processes, context, and time. The teachers interviewed reported that they entered the workforce at a time when new teachers could have an emergency credential. While that practice continues for special education and other hard to fill positions (Young, 2011), it is not the case for teacher candidates pursuing a multiple subject credential. The teachers interviewed shared that while they received guidance as new teachers, their fieldwork experiences were not as rigorous. The demands and resources available when they started were not the same as they are now. Over the years, the driving force behind their actions in the classroom has been to help students be successful.

Unlike the teachers in Ponte and Twomey's (2014) and Betlem et al.'s (2019) studies, the teachers in this study reported being unclear about the university expectations. The university asked mentor teachers to watch a series of training modules to prepare for their mentoring experience. Unfortunately, the one teacher who mentioned the videos reported that they were unclear. Another teacher said she would not mind participating in weekend seminars, even with the student teachers. Each principal had their own set of expectations. The principal at School C had taken it upon herself to provide the teachers who were mentoring teacher candidates a common planning time. All of the stakeholders in the current study wanted to have a successful model, but the process was still very unclear. The university worked with several districts and

schools and providing personalized attention to each site where teacher candidates were at, was not feasible. The three sites in the partnership had been hand-picked by the district and university team because of their forward-thinking leadership team. As with any collaborative action research project, the aim was to be inclusive and work together to determine the next best steps for all involved.

Without adequate training that force could be stifled and even debilitating to the students they teach and novice teachers they attempt to mentor (Ponte & Twomey, 2014). Changing district and state level policies, muddle a teachers' ability to remain current in the field while they also attempt to address students' needs (Betlem et al., 2019; Ponte & Twomey, 2014). For example, in Australia, Betlem et al. (2019) reported recent policy changes have shifted mentor roles to be more managerial rather than collaborative. In the United States, mentors who were interviewed expressed uncertainty about their role as a mentor. Their ability to mentor is further confounded if they do not understand the demands being placed on new teachers.

Limitations

Throughout the course of the study there were several limitations. Some were foreseeable while others did not surface until the project was well underway. The first limitation of this study was the inability to make use of the initial needs' assessment from the first phase of the partnership. Although my research university would have approved it, the school district preferred I did not. Their concern was that teachers had not agreed to the data being used for the purposes of a dissertation. The data that was used in the present study was all collected after IRB approval.

Considering that this was a collaborative action research project, the data sources were developed and approved by all stakeholders. To be mindful of the teachers' time, stakeholders

did not want to ask repetitive questions. The concerns shared by the stakeholders was valid. As a result, however, the surveys consisted of several single item constructs. Initially, this study was proposed as a mixed methods study but as a result of the low number of participants and single item constructs, the survey data was used to support the qualitative findings rather than as a primary source of evidence. If the pre-professional development survey would have been included, single item constructs would not have been as problematic. In an attempt to run a statistical analysis, I conducted a series of exploratory factor analyses to determine which constructs from the postsurvey were reliable. Therefore, the survey was only used to support the qualitative data. Another shortcoming of the survey was that I did not ask teachers ethnicity, gender, or specific number of years that they had been teaching. Those demographic descriptors would have allowed for a richer story. Future studies using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory should include those characteristics.

The aims of the project were to develop a system where the university and the local school district could both capitalize. As suggested by Miles et al. (2014) each site was not monolithic and that made it difficult to implement the same procedures and professional development across all three sites. The principals had their own leadership styles and had instituted programs to meet their needs. What made the project successful was the investment and commitment that each stakeholder made to ensure the success of the partnership. Therefore, the training modules that were developed should not be merely packaged and implemented as standalone trainings. University teams and School Districts need to be invested and identify common goals. Future projects should have stakeholders who could be designated to serve as coaches and be released from their regular duties to ensure that both, the university and school district, are present on the school campuses providing support to the teachers.

Another limitation with the implementation of future iterations of this work is that the district or university might decide to go in a different direction. It is no secret that school districts and universities often embark on new initiatives and while the transformation that has unfolded at these three sites in valuable, it is not guaranteed that the partnership will be sustainable. The partnership that has developed over the course of a year and half will require an investment of time, resources, and ongoing evaluation to keep the traction that gained over the course of this time. Stakeholders from all sides of the table will need to continue to work collaboratively to ensure that teachers, regardless of where they are in their career are receiving adequate support to be inclusive and meet the needs of all of their students.

There are so many variables to take into account, which clearly explained the model developed by Anderson and colleagues (2014). Inclusion, however, is mercurial and driven by policy. There is a great amount of variability with implementation that transpires across learning contexts. For a broader understanding of school environments in relation to inclusive education please see Anderson et al. (2014) as their work "does not attempt to neaten the messes that are school environments," but rather expose them for what they are (p. 9). The findings from this study, highlight the complexity associated with developing an inclusive school using an Expanded Bioecological Model of Inclusive Education. The expanded model highlights how the diverging views and sentiment regarding inclusive practices further confound efforts to create an inclusive campus. The model I have introduced captures and allows others to see how a myriad of factors associated with inclusion could ultimately impact the learner. Due to the nature of study design, a closer more in-depth study of the model needs to be conducted. Furthermore, if I had access to the presurvey and first focus group, I would have been able to account for time

across a broad cultural context, informing us about the impact of each process, person, and context over time.

Implications for Policy Research and Practice

The lessons from this iteration of the project could serve as a conceptualization of what veteran teachers need and would like to successfully implement inclusive evidence-based practices. At the macrolevel, teachers should be able to earn additional coursework units for mentoring. If teachers are at the highest end of the pay scale, I would recommend reducing the licensure renewal fees and instead require evidence of continuing education units. Secondly, the state of California instituted a Bilingual Authorization for teachers also referred to as the Bilingual, Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development (BCLAD). Something similar should be instituted for working with students who have IEPs. If we expect teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, then we need to be sure that they understand the policies related to compliance and best practice. In 2016, the state of California put forth new TPEs. They were first introduced for individuals working towards a multiple subject credential. Now, teacher preparation programs are beginning to align them with the education specialist credentials. While that is a step in the right direction, policymakers have to account for teachers who already in the field and who feel overwhelmed by the new initiatives.

Moving into the exosystem, school districts and universities should continue to look at ways to collaborate and provide ongoing support for teachers at various phases of their careers. This project was an example of the positive impact that partnerships could have teachers' perceptions about collaborating and revisiting their own praxis. It was also a way for the university to identify teachers who would be most well suited to work with teacher candidates.

Lastly, it was helpful evaluative feedback for the university to understand where there might be communication breakdowns between the mentor teachers and university.

This model should be replicated with other universities and school districts. An alternative, could also take the lessons learned from this project to inform future studies and projects. It would also be valuable to do a comparative study using the same model. All of the sites in the current study had very similar landscapes. Future studies could examine how socio-economic status impacts teacher perceptions. A comparative study between one university and schools who serve different demographics would inform the field about how the same policies are implemented in communities with distinct forms of capital.

When considering the types of professional development to implement at schools, administrators and teacher educators alike need to allow time for teachers to process the content. They should model and provide opportunities for reflection. If feasible, ongoing coaching should be available to teachers for the purpose of giving them constructive feedback and guidance. One method that warrants further investigation is the impact that role playing has on building teacher capacity during trainings. During the fourth module all of the teachers were presented with a script regarding co-teaching and mentorship. While that was not explored in this current study, it should be an area of further exploration.

Throughout the trainings, there were several artifacts that were collected and not included as data sources for the current study. The data could potentially inform future inquires. There is data regarding the challenging behaviors that teachers regularly encountered in their classrooms, the exit tickets from all of the trainings, and the counterstory readers theater script that was presented to all of the teachers during the fourth training. If this partnership is emulated with a different student and teaching demographic it would be worthwhile to do a comparative analysis

of the data sets. The added data set could help strengthen the current findings and inform the field about differences that exist between communities.

Conclusion

School privatization and smaller family sizes are leading to a decline in school enrollment. Furthermore, it is putting a spotlight on school inequity. *Every Student Succeed Act* was the most recent attempt to level the playing field by letting states decide what their schools needed. As state, local districts, and universities prepare for the wave of teachers who will be retiring, they need to devise an action strategy to bring new teachers into the field. In the state of California, new TPEs were developed to account for the shift in student diversity. If teachers are not adequately prepared then students are more likely to be set up for failure, whether intentional or not. Therefore, all teachers need support just as all students need a free appropriate public education.

The current findings suggest that there needs to be a continued shift towards cross institutional collaboration to help teachers not only remain current in the field, but beyond the first five years. By doing so, we are more likely to build teacher capacity, improve inclusive practices, and shift teacher perceptions regarding student diversity in public school. These data have highlighted some of the benefits and challenges that teachers encounter when they attempt to collaborate to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. They also stress the need to give teachers more autonomy in their planning time and more guidance on implementing evidence-based practices. The Expanded Inclusive Bioecological Model could serve as a reference to better understand the dynamics between social policy and the development of teachers in relation to their understanding and implementation of inclusive education practices.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

University Administrators/Teacher Preparation Chairs

1. How are schools selected as fieldwork sites?

2. How are mentor teachers selected within schools?

3. How are candidates assigned to mentor teachers?

4. How would you describe a successful mentor teacher?

5. How is the mentor teacher/student teacher relationship supported?

6. What are some challenges that arise in school selection? mentor selection? candidate assignment to a mentor?

7. What would an ideal mentor teacher selection process look like to you?

Site Administrators

1. How would you describe a successful mentor teacher at your school? Probe: What did they do with the teacher that made them stand out?

2. How do you recruit mentor teachers? Probe: What are the qualities that you see in exemplary mentor teachers?

3. What problems have you experienced with the current process of recruiting mentor teachers?

4. In what ways are mentor teachers at your site prepared for their role of mentoring?

5. How would you describe the ways in which you, as principal, support mentor teachers?

6. What is your current process of at your school of assigning a student teacher to a mentor teacher? Probe: what types of processes have you experienced with other university teacher preparation programs?

7. Have you had a mentor teacher that did not work well with a student teacher? If so, can you describe what were some challenges that arose?

8. In what ways is the mentor teacher's pedagogical knowledge kept current?

9. Is there a process for evaluating the mentor teacher?

Mentor Teachers

1. When you were a new teacher, think about a mentor you had who was effective. Why were they effective? Probe: Were there any mentors who were ineffective? In what ways were they ineffective?

2. What do you think are the qualities in a good mentor teacher-student teacher relationship?

3. How were you selected to be a mentor teacher at your school?

4. What were some of the opportunities and challenges in mentoring student teachers?

5. How were you supported as a mentor teacher by your principal? by the university teacher preparation program? Probe: if you've worked with a different university teacher preparation programs, how has the process of support and expectations varied? (or other IHE if not a university mentor teacher)?

6. How would you like to see the mentor teacher-student teacher experience structured and supported?

Focus Group Script and Questions

Brief Introduction [**don't read verbatim**]
Hi and thank you all for taking the time to meet with us today. As you know I am _____
and this is _____. As you know, our ultimate goal is to foster and continue to build
*your capacity to mentor student teachers and to teach **all students**. Ideally, we would like student*
teachers to practice what they have learned throughout their credential program while receiving
guidance from you. Today, we hope to spend some time learning about how you (or your
teachers) would like to grow as an educator and how we could best continue to support you as a
potential mentor teacher. We should be done today at about 4:30. Could everyone please
introduce themselves, sharing the school you represent, the grade level you currently teach, and
if the number of years teaching? [**if you are taking notes it will be important to capture the**
grade level and number of years teaching- assigning a number or letter to each
participant].

Let's start by reviewing some ground rules.
Rules of Conduct
- *Participation in the focus group is voluntary. We're assuming that anyone here has*
  consented to be a part of the focus group. Anything said is confidential and any reports
  will not include names or identifying details.
- *It is ok if at any time you do not want to respond to a specific question.*
- *Please respect the opinions of others even if you disagree. We want this to be a safe*
  space.
- *Please try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we could cover all the*
  material.

Suggestions for Individual Prompts:
- Could you provide a little more detail?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- Is there anything else?
- Please describe what you mean?
- I don't understand.
- Tell me more about that.
- How does that work?

Suggestions for Group Prompts:
- Does anyone else have anything they'd like to add?
- (people nodding) Some of you look like you could relate, would anyone like to share their thoughts?

Before we begin, do you have any questions? [Throughout the questions you might want to refer to some of the prompts on the first page]

<u>Teachers</u>

1. What strategies have you implemented or changed to help students access Core Content since we've begun the PDs?

2. Think about when you have a disruptive student in class, has the way you've responded to their behavior changed since we've begun the PDs? Are there school wide norms to guide your response? PROBE: Could you please describe them?

3. Which practices that were discussed during our PDs did you find most useful?

4. During the PDs, what did you learn from working in your PLCs with your colleagues? PROBE: What is something you would like to learn more about in the future?

5. Are you able to regularly collaborate with a colleague about students or curriculum? PROBE: Who do you collaborate with? Are you able to choose or is it assigned? Are there structures in your school that allow you to collaborate with a colleague? With a group of colleagues? If yes, please describe what you do together, what typically happens, and how often do you meet? If no, why not?

6. Over the past two years, have you tried to co-teach with a colleague? How did that go? If not, why not?

7. Is there anything you'd like to add or share that we haven't already discussed?

Before we begin, do you have any questions? [Throughout the questions you might want to refer to some of the prompts on the first page]

<u>Principals</u>

1. Are you able to see evidence of what was covered in the PDs being implemented in the classrooms? PROBE: Please describe what you've observed?

2. Do you feel that the PDs have shifted teachers' perceptions of working with diverse learners since the implementation of the PDs? If yes, could you give some examples. If not, why?

3. Have you and the teachers been able to talk about the PDs that have been presented? PROBE: As a faculty or with a leadership team? If yes, what was the outcome? If not, why?

4. What are some potential barriers or obstacles that might keep a teacher from implementing some of the strategies presented in the PDs?

5. Are there structures in your school that allow teachers to collaborate? If so, please describe. If not, what do you think of the obstacles might be?

6. Have you seen evidence of co-teaching? If so, how do you think it's gone? If not, what do you think is keeping teachers from co-teaching?

7. Would you be open to providing time to teachers who serve as master teachers time to debrief with their student teachers or university supervisors?

8. Is there anything you'd like to add or share that we haven't already discussed?

Appendix C

Survey

Introduction:
Thank you for participating in our partnership project. We'd like to ask you to please complete the following survey questions related to your experiences meeting the needs of all of your students and with our professional development workshops. This survey should not take more than 15 minutes.

As a reminder, please answer each question to the best of your ability and remember that participation is optional, you are free to skip any question if you deem it necessary.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Rosalinda Larios, M.A. at rlarios6@calstatela.edu

Experiences and Perceptions of Elementary School Teachers Survey
- -

Q1 What school site do you currently work at?

    ◯ School (1)

    ◯ School (2)

    ◯ School (3)

- -

Q2 What grade(s) do you currently teach?

_____

- -

Q3 Which best describes your role?

▼ General education teacher (1) ... Paraprofessional (5)

- -

Q4 How long have you been working at this current school site (including this year)?

▼ 0-2 years (1) ... 10 or more years (4)

Experiences with Students with Disabilities*

For this next section, we will ask you questions in regards to working with students with disabilities.

Q5 Please rate how adequate the support has been that you received to effectively instruct students with disabilities.

▼ N/A I have not received this type of support (46) ... Very inadequate (45)

Q6 How prepared do you feel to support the following students with disabilities?

	Not prepared (1)	Somewhat prepared (2)	Very prepared (3)	N/A: I do not have experience supporting this (4)
Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (1)	○	○	○	○
Students with autism (2)	○	○	○	○
Students with physical disabilities (3)	○	○	○	○
Students with intellectual disabilities (4)	○	○	○	○

Q7 During the times that these students with disabilities are included in general education classes, how successful do you consider your current instructional model in meeting their:

	Not at all successful (1)	Moderately successful (2)	Very successful (3)	N/A: I do not have experience supporting this group of learners (4)
Academic Needs (1)	○	○	○	○
Social Needs (2)	○	○	○	○

Reflections on Training

Q31 For the following questions, we want to know more about your experience during the professional development sessions. Thinking back to the professional development sessions conducted by the University and School District, how much more prepared do you feel to meet the needs of students?

○ Much more (18)

○ Somewhat more (19)

○ About the same (20)

○ Somewhat less (21)

○ Much less (22)

Q32 Do you feel better prepared to collaborate with fellow teachers across areas of expertise?

○ Much better (14)

○ Moderately better (15)

○ Slightly better (16)

○ About the same (17)

Q33 Which strategies presented in the professional development training were most helpful to your practice?

_____

Q34 Of the choices below, please check any or all of the activities you would be interested in participating in at a future time

☐   Co-teaching with a colleague (1)

☐   Mentor a Novice Teacher (2)

☐   Mentor a Student Teacher (3)

☐   Model a Lesson for Colleagues (4)

* Students with disabilities are reported as diverse learners

Appendix D

Table D1

Selected Individual Responses for Each Preferred Strategy

Co-teaching and Collaboration	Positive Behavior Support	Universal Design for Learning	Co-teaching and Collaboration, Positive Behavior Support, and Universal Design for Learning	Co-teaching and Collaboration, and Positive Behavior Support
"Reviewing recommended strategies for co-teaching! What co-teaching is!"	"De-escalation strategies"	"Differentiating instruction based on students' needs"	"Co-Teaching & Collab Strategies and the different UDL strategies presented"	"Co teaching, behavior support"
"I think looking at each other's strengths and weaknesses and observing how we can complement each other is a worthwhile strategy."	"Behavior strategies, and modifications for students with special needs"	"Going over various strategies from UDL and the many voices of the facilitation team were incredibly helpful."		
"Talking and working with colleagues."	"Module 3 Behavior"	"The UDL template and examples."		
"Looking at lessons and working together to figure out various access points and accommodations."	"How to work with challenging students"	"UDL, differentiation"		

Table D2

Current Instructional Model in Meeting Students with Disabilities Academic and Social Needs

Level of Success	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	*Range*
Academic Needs	2.3	2.0	.494	2
Social Needs	2.39	2.0	.492	1

Note. (*n* = 74) The scale ranged from 1 = not at all successful, 2= Moderately successful, 3= Very Successful, 4 = N/A: I do not have experience supporting this group.

Table D3

Level of Preparation to work with Students with Disabilities

Descriptors	*N*	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	*Range*
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	74	2.61	3.0	.492	1
Autism	73	2.12	2.0	.494	2
Physical Disabilities	71	2.11	2.0	.574	2
Intellectual Disabilities	74	2.31	2.0	.595	2

Note. The scale ranged from 1 = not prepared to 4 = N/A: I do not have experience supporting this group.

Appendix E

Word Cloud of Survey Responses

Appendix F

Counterstory

Context

Ms. G is currently in her first year of teaching at one of three schools in the district that have partnered with a local university to participate in ongoing professional development to guide new teachers as they begin their professional career. The three schools have a collaborative culture where the teachers actively engage with one another to look at student work samples and data for the purpose of meeting all of their students' needs. Additionally, Ms. G is being observed as part of her induction program and is required to have four formal observations.

Ms. D has been working with the district for a couple of years, however, it is her first year working with the teachers at this particular school. She is supportive of Ms. G and wants her to get an understanding of how teachers at the school manage their classroom and how it impacts the classroom climate. Additionally, she is encouraging Ms. G to explore various teaching strategies and incorporate universal design for learning in her lessons. The current scenario takes place immediately after Ms. G a first-year teacher and her district mentor Ms. D begin to debrief about her lesson.

Narrator: Walking out of the classroom, Ms. G, and Ms. D begin to debrief about the lesson she had just taught with a 2nd-grade teacher.

Ms. D.- "So how was that. How do you think it went?"

Ms. G.- "Well, I was happy you were there to watch"

Ms. D.- "Really, you looked a lot more nervous than you have in the past. And I've seen you teach several times."

Ms. G- "Yeah, well for some reason I felt like the teacher was judging me instead of teaching with me."

Ms. D.- "Hmm. How so?"

Ms. G.- "Well, for example, when we were planning the lesson, she was ok with staying after school, but her process and my process are completely different. She was completing a very general plan and I, well you know, had an additional section in my plan that included a space for the accommodations we should probably make for some of our students. She didn't ask too much about it and said "ok, but you're doing a lot." Then when I took out the clocks during the actual lesson and started to pass them out, her facial expression looked like it was a waste of time. But I really think some of our students needed the clocks."

Ms. D.- "Yeah, all of the students looked really engaged, though. You mean both of you didn't want to use the clocks?"

Ms. G.- "Not initially, but she agreed to it." I referenced the section about promoting positive attitudes toward math in the Vaughn et al. (2018) book and she said let's try it.

Ms. D.- "Ok, good. I thought the lesson went well. All of the students were engaged, and I couldn't tell which ones needed additional support because everyone was working together. Next time I'd like for you to co-teach with a 3rd-grade teacher."

Narrator- Knowing that there was going to be one more observation, Ms. G began to think about the teachers in the third-grade team. She knew that each teacher had their strengths and began to explain to Ms. D.

Ms. G.- "Well, Ms. B has the most experience. In fact, she even taught one her student's parents. She is an amazing person. Every year, she organized the Thanksgiving boxes for families and helped students after school. Unfortunately, there are a few students in her room that well- they're something else! They're always in the office and for some reason, it looks like they never get to school on time. One day when I was walking past Ms. B's room I saw a student hitting another classmate."

Ms. D.- "Ijole, that doesn't sound good. Did you happen to talk to her about it?"

Ms. G.- "No, otherwise I think she's amazing and who am I to make suggestions or even question what's happening in a more senior teacher's classroom?"

Ms. D.- "I think she'd be open to talking about it. I bet she's willing to hear your ideas. What about the other teachers? Is there a better fit?"

Ms. G.- (With a big smile) "Ms. K's classroom is bright and colorful, and she definitely feels comfortable meeting the needs of all of her students and she always volunteers to attend professional development training! Her students are seated in pods, they're all usually working at their own pace and there's always soft music playing in the background. One thing about Ms. K is that she always speaks her mind. She's clearly always the most vocal at staff meetings- I mean she tells it like it is."
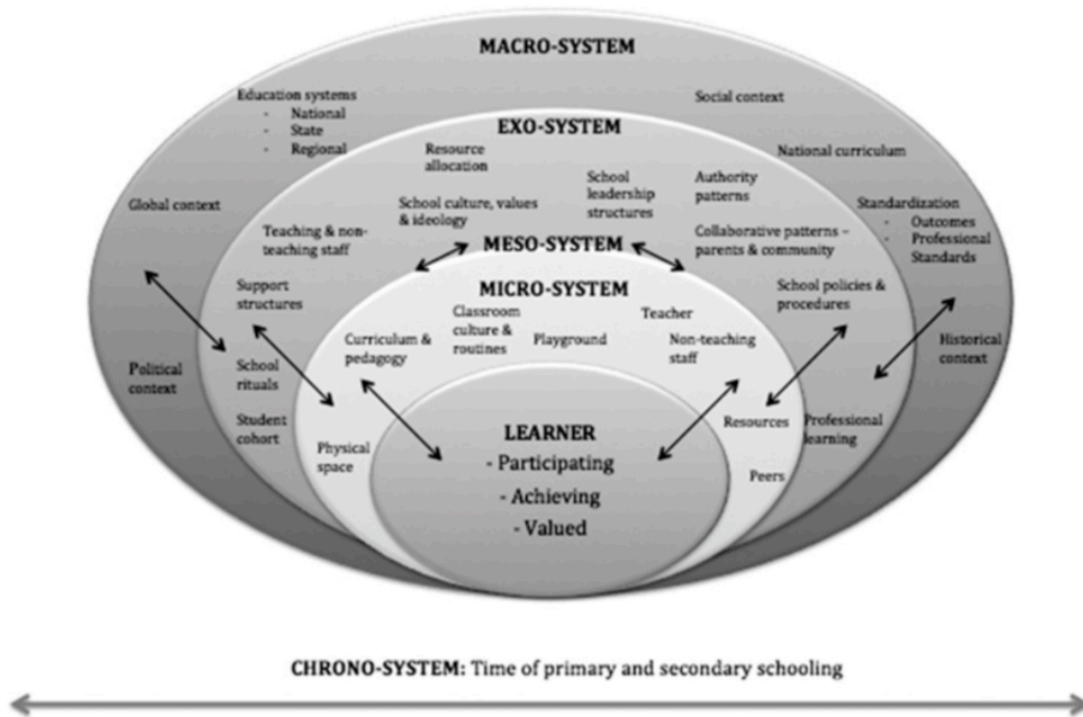
Appendix H

Ecology of Inclusive Education Model

Figure 1. The Ecology of Inclusive Education.

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