Teacher Self-Efficacy and Successful Inclusion: Profiles and Narratives of Eight Teachers

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ABSTRACT

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Kathleen Maika

The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between teacher self - efficacy as defined by Albert Bandura and general education elementary school teachers' ability to create inclusive classrooms for Students with Learning Disabilities (SWLDs).

Seven general classroom teachers and one education consultant from some elementary schools participated in this study. All seven general classroom teachers were women and the one consultant was male. The study is based on two journals generated by each of the seven participating teachers, using questions prepared by the researcher, followed by a one-on-one interview. The aim was to gain a better understanding of their access to resources, feelings of preparedness, stressors and knowledge of Learning Disabilities (LDs) and inclusive practices in regular classrooms. Each teacher had at least one LD student in their classroom. The teacher narratives do illustrate the links between teachers' levels of self-efficacy and inclusive practices. They also support the literature indicating that the higher levels of self-efficacy result in higher levels of inclusive practices by the teachers but there are also many mitigating factors.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to all SWLDs who face inequity in Education.

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Acronyms

ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ATIE -Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education
AQ - Additional Qualification
DD - Developmental Delay
EA - Educational Assistant
EQAO - Education Quality and Accountability Office
ERW - Educational Resource Worker
GTA - Greater Toronto Area
HSP - Home School Program
IEP - Individual Educational Plan
JK - Junior Kindergarten
LDAC - Learning Disability Association of Canada
LD - Learning Disability
LDAO - Learning Disability Association of Ontario
LRT - Learning Resource Teacher
ODD - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
OCT - Ontario College of Teachers
MID - Mild Intellectual Delay
P.D - Professional Development
SERC- Special Education Resource Classroom
SERT- Special Education Resource Teacher
SWLD - Student with Learning Disability

Chapter One – Personal Experience, Literature Review and Research Question

This chapter starts with a brief description of a personal experience which prompted me to start investigating the question of Learning Disabilities (LD). I then present a review of the literature on LDs and formulate the research questions.

Personal Experience

I am an LD student. I have been identified with a Learning Disability (LD) since grade seven. Although I was not identified until I reached grade seven, for as long as I can remember, I have always felt that I experienced learning differently than my classmates did. Reading and writing did not come easily to me, and some of my earliest memories are having difficulties with these subjects. My parents were aware of my learning needs. Both hold positions in education; they easily recognized that I was a student with a learning disability (SWLD) and were determined to ensure my educational rights. In my early years of schooling, my parents pursued my identification process. This process took two years as the administration team did not recognize my LD since my academic performance was good in most areas, and my behavior was never a cause for concern.

Through my educational career I have understood what it feels like to be an outsider. It was never guaranteed that I would be able to access the classroom material as my other classmates did, or that I would be able to express my knowledge easily. Therefore, I can strongly identify with the importance of an inclusive classroom and the need for accommodations. I know from personal experience that inclusive practices allow me to participate in class and properly demonstrate my learning. My experiences in class with learning have strongly been influenced by the teacher's knowledge base and ability to create inclusive practices. In reflecting on my grade school experiences, the more positive classroom learning experiences happened when teachers provided multiple ways for me to demonstrate knowledge (e.g. plays, hands-on science experiments, posters, board games, etc.). I experienced frustration when classroom activities were limited to reading and writing. As I went on to high school and post-secondary education I became more aware of my academic rights and accommodations. As I was more cognizant of

what inclusion looked like in the classroom, often I noticed that it was not always present. It also was frustrating, since often I did not have easy access to accommodations.

If you asked me six months ago what my specific LD was, I would have only been able to give you a broad nondescript definition. The truth is, I did not fully understand how my LD worked and was unaware in how this affected my learning. When I was growing up, my parents consistently associated LDs positively, as they expressed their on-going optimistic feelings about my ability to succeed academically. They always ensured me that I could learn and perform just as well as other classmates, I just needed different avenues to access this success. I also was aware that as a learner, I had strengths and weaknesses and I needed to develop different strategies to help my weaker areas of learning. As for what exactly my learning disabilities are, I only knew that I sometimes mixed up my letters, misplaced words in sentences, and had difficulties reading new and unfamiliar text. Today, I know my learning disability is much more than that.

With the exception of my second psychological assessment, as I do not recall my first, and my parents trying to inform me of my learning disability, it was fairly rare to have an experience with a teacher trying to converse with me about the specifics of my LD. I have never had a general education teacher properly describe to me what my LD is and how it effects my learning. It was fairly rare to have an experience with a teacher trying to converse with me about the specifics of my LD. I have never had a general education teacher properly describe to me what my LD is and how it impacts my learning. It was not until I became self- educated on LDs that I did understand how my disability affected my participation in learning. This self-directed interest went beyond reading of the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), which made little to no sense to me, but to the reading of texts on LDs, becoming a member of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) and attending workshops. Now I have a better understanding of why I experience difficulties. I now know that my LD goes beyond just reading and writing and extends to language and memory. I also now know that my LD is present not only in my academic life, but extends in social life, and I am now aware of more strategies and services that may assist me with my LD. However, I did not acquire this knowledge until the completion of my Master's degree. I wonder how my educational career, life and sense of self would have been different had I been aware of these realities earlier.

In retrospect, with interests in education, I am heavily immersed in a community of teachers. Often teachers discuss the difficulties of having SWLDs in the classroom. One friend, a first year high school teacher described the difficulties of having so many students with IEPs in the classroom. He had not read the IEP and was unaware of the accommodations. He expressed his frustration of having so many different learning needs in the classroom. Looking at his situation makes me empathize with teachers who have not received any education or training on LDs and inclusive practices. This leads me to believe that the issue of creating inclusive practices does not only lie in the hands of teachers, students and parents, but also is a systemic issue. Teachers need to have the tools and resources in order to provide equitable education to SWLDs.

This personal experience prompted my interest in examining the topic of learning disabilities for my MA thesis project in Educational Studies. I read the relevant literature and formulated my research questions and developed a methodology to understand the context of inclusive practice and the role of teachers in managing inclusive classrooms.

The topic is multifaceted, the learning disabilities multiple, and there are different ways of approaching the research questions in order to gain further insight. I decided to concentrate on the role of the teachers and the degree of preparedness of teachers to confront inclusive classrooms. I wanted to learn more about the formal education received in this respect as well as any resources and support mechanisms available to the teachers seeking help in their practice.

Literature Review

According to Statistics Canada, learning disabilities account for the highest number of students in special education. “In 2006, nearly 9 in 10 children (89.6%) with disabilities needing special education or attending a special school required special education because of a learning disability” (Statistics Canada, 2006). Statistics Canada also report that close to half of parents of students with special needs report difficulty obtaining special education for their child. Lack of services and staff within schools were the main reasons for not meeting the needs of special education students, with lack of funding for education aids also being addressed. Parents also reported that they viewed their children with special needs as under - performing in comparison to children without special needs (Statistics Canada, 2006). Learning disabilities are not the same as intellectual disabilities. Therefore, students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge through proper accommodation in an inclusive classroom. Statistics Canada’s acknowledgement

of the concerns of parents, the needs for services, lack of staff and funding is an important step forward, but does not remedy the problem. It is important to address student under - performance further by determining the factors contributing to the under-performance of students with special needs and to address these factors.

The learning disability of each student must be properly identified. Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) defines learning disabilities (LD) as:

> ... a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and / or non - verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning (a), in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. (LDAO, n.d)

Psychological processes are further defined as: phonological processing, memory and attention, processing speed, language processing, perceptual - motor processing, visual spatial processing, and executive functions (LDAO, n.d). Learning disabilities affect individuals differently and affect one or more of the following: oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, understanding, etc.), reading (e.g., decoding, comprehension, etc.), written language (e.g., spelling, written expression, etc.) and mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving, etc.) which may affect organizational skills, social perception and social interaction (LDAO, n.d). LDAO notes that learning disabilities are lifelong and caused by genetics, or other congenital and / or acquired neurobiological factors. Learning disabilities are separate from intellectual disabilities (LDAO, n.d).

Students are identified with a learning disability through a psycho-educational assessment by a registered psychologist resulting in an IEP. A student's IEP is essential in identifying properly learning disabilities and mandating instructions for proper accommodations and modifications for equal access to education. IEPs must include transition plans with a detailed outline of "student's transition from school to work, further education, and/ or community living" (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 4). LDAO reports that 5 to 10 percent of Canadians have been identified with a learning disability (LDAO, n.d). In 2003, Ontario showed the highest number of reported students identified with special needs in any province or state in North America (Bennet & Wynne, 2006).

There has been debate about the success of IEPs for students with LDs. In theory, IEPs are designed to benefit the child. An IEP is an individual plan that identifies the student's learning strengths, weaknesses and recommended accommodations. Teachers must be aware of and adhere to recommendations in the IEP. These are the guidelines that aim to provide students with LD with equal access to education. Yet, reports have also indicated that IEPs have not been helpful for students with LD. IEPs have not been considered useful because of lack of implementation and data (Young Buckley, 2004). Some teachers have used accommodations within the classroom broadly rather than on an individual level (Young Buckley, 2004). In order for IEPs to be effectively used, there is a need for better understanding of IEPs and tools to put them in action. Due to inadequacies and missing information reports of poor quality, IEPs have been made ineffective in the past (Young Buckley, 2004). Research is necessary to determine whether the quality of IEPs is adequate today. Furthermore, IEPs have not been successful because of teachers' lack of use of recommendations from IEPs within the classroom. Reports indicate that failure to follow IEPs has been due to: failure to follow content of IEP (i.e., implementing no accommodations), failure to implement correct modifications (i.e., modifications made were not recommended by IEP), some teachers report not having access to IEPs, and failure to consistently follow IEPs - only referred to IEPs a few times a year (Young Buckley, 2004). Young Buckley (2004) calls for a need for more research to properly understand IEPs' function within the school environment.

In an Ontario context, general education classroom teachers play a significant role in creating and up-dating SWLDs' IEPs. Province-wide standards were implemented for school boards to ensure the proper development, implementation and monitoring of IEPs according to Regulation 181/ 98 of the Education Act. In 2000 - 2001, Ontario schools conducted a review of IEPs from random selected boards to ensure standards were met and to provide feedback. The IEP is updated by the teacher to record changes in student program and services to ensure student goals and learning expectations are met (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000).The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) create the IEP for the SWLD. This committee may include: the school principal, the supervisory officer of the board, the school's resource teacher and the child's classroom teacher. Therefore, the teacher also contributes to the creation of the IEP (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000)

Brief History of Learning Disabilities in Ontario

Students with learning disabilities have not always had access to equal education. Parents were responsible to taking their children's education into their own hands until proper legal legislation was established in Ontario in 1962 (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). The Human Rights Code maintained rights to equal access to services, such as education (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). In 1980, the Ontario Education Amendment Act included Bill 82, requiring Ontario school boards to provide all students with special education needs with proper special education programs and services (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Therefore, there are legal responsibilities placed on the Ontario education sector in providing proper access to education to students with learning disabilities leading to student success. According to the Ministry of Education Ontario, "Bill 82 is of historical interest only. However, the principal provisions of Bill 82 remain in the Education Act" of the Ontario Education Amendment Act" (The Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d).

There has been a significant shift in access to education for students with learning disabilities. Debate has facilitated student integration or inclusion into general education classrooms from self - contained classrooms. This process is also referred to as mainstreaming (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) stated that placing students in separate classes may be in violation of their equality rights (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). In 1997, the Supreme Court decided that individual cases should indicate the students' needs of class placement with the best interest of the student in mind (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). However, research also supports the positive benefits of segregated schools and classrooms for individuals with learning disabilities. Special schools for learning disabled students present an alternative to the current education system. Schools specifically designed for LD students allow for more assistive technology, comprehensive accommodations, better pupil - teacher ratio, and high levels of teacher understanding on the topic of LD. Yet, research is still necessary to measure the level of teacher self - efficacy and student understanding about their own learning disabilities within segregated schools. Research is also necessary to determine the possible negative outcomes for segregated

schools for LD students.

The shift from segregating students with LD into their own classrooms to mainstreaming these students into general classrooms has changed teacher responsibilities. However, during the period of 1980 - 1990, there was no additional teacher training to address the needs of students with disabilities (Walter-Thomas, 1997). There has been resistance by teachers to inclusion of students with learning disabilities in general education classes due to lack of training of special education (Vandergriff, 2003). As of 2006 the Final Report to the Ministry of Education: Special Education Transformation, indicated a need in special education training for teaching certification within Ontario. The working table suggests to the Ministry of Education that teachers' eligibility of teaching certification must be dependent on the completion of a minimum of a half credit course on special education (Bennet & Wynne, 2006). This indicates that there is no current special education requirement for teacher certification in Ontario. Students studying to become teachers in Ontario have the choice of taking special education courses as electives. These courses are not mandatory for certification. Teachers are provided with in-service, focus meetings, out-service and extra resources. They also have access to special education teachers (M. Maika, personal communication, Nov. 13, 2010). However, there is a gap between policy and practice. Teachers are so overwhelmed with new technology and teaching strategies that some teachers do not feel confident in their implementation. A wealth of new information concerning the use of technology for inclusive education is available and expanding. Teachers are feeling overwhelmed in meeting the needs of all students in the classroom (M. Maika, personal communication, Nov. 13, 2010). It is important to address teachers' understanding and ability to teach students with learning disabilities in order for students to have equal access to education that the Education Act of Ontario mandates.

Studies indicate that the gap between practice and policy has significantly affected students with learning disabilities. Putting a Canadian Face on Learning Disabilities (PACFOLD), a Learning Disability Association of Canada (LDAC) study in 2007 was, "the first study that researchers accessed the database of Statistics Canada to examine the impact of living with or having a child with a disability" (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 5). This three year study used data from Statistics Canada and focus groups of individuals with learning disabilities and their families across Canada (Philpott & Chail, 2008). Results showed that:

> Canadians with LD were: twice as likely to drop out of school; significantly underachieving in even functional literacy: less likely to experience stable employment; more likely to report dramatically higher levels of stress, depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, and poorer mental /physical health than general population. (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 5)

This study indicates that the access to education and struggle present within school has an effect on LD students' lives after secondary school. LD students are more likely to have lower paying jobs affecting the quality of their lives (Philpott & Chail, 2008).

PACFOLD researched the level of training for psychologists and teachers for LD students. PACFOLD results state that 92% of the regions that responded to the survey indicated that teachers had little if any awareness of "the nature of LD, knowledge of their role in accommodating these students" entering into their teaching careers (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 9). This study illustrated that, in 2006, only 8% of the regions surveyed had some awareness and understanding of LD and accommodations. The study also concluded that new psychologists do not require the completion of a course identifying understanding of LD or in examining academic accommodations for students with LD (Philpott & Chail, 2008). Therefore, similar to teachers, psychologists enter into their roles with little knowledge on LD or their role in accommodating LD students (Philpott & Chail, 2008). It is important to further investigate how awareness and understanding of students' LDs effect the degree of self- efficacy of teachers and psychologists, and what implementations can be made to increase awareness and understanding of LDs for teachers and psychologists.

Other than the Education Act, many school boards do not have specific policies for LD students (Philpott & Chill, 2008). This has caused many LD students to slip through the cracks of the current education system without any negative consequences to school boards. Furthermore, governments have not taken responsibility for LD needs in education.

In British Columbia, an unprecedented law suit was filed against the school board by parents of an LD student whose needs were not being met. The injustice of education for LD students was featured in the Moore family law case v. the British Columbia Ministry of Education (LDAC, 2010). The Moore family found it necessary to switch from public to private school in order for their son, who had a learning disability, to access a proper education. Having

realized the discrimination their son faced in public school as a student with LD, they decided to take the matter to court (LDAC, 2010). LDAC states:

> The Moore Family, unwilling to let discrimination hurt their son's future or that of so many students with LDs, courageously decided to file a human rights complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal, not only on their son's behalf but on behalf of all children similarly diagnosed and denied needed services. (LDAC, 2010)

The outcome demonstrated that the British Columbia Ministry of Education and the District School Division discriminates against students with LDs through cutbacks that, "disproportionately impacted children with learning disabilities and by failing to provide them with necessary programs and services" (LDAC, 2010). Jeff Moore completed his grade school in the 90's. This is an example of the history of discrimination faced by students with LD. More attention needs to be directed to detect the extent of discrimination which affects the ability of students with LD to access educational services, as well as their ability to achieve successes as a student.

Self - efficacy is the level of confidence one has at task completion (Schaefer, 2010). Albert Bandura defines self-efficacy as:

> People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce and designate levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self - efficacy is defined by beliefs that determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. (Bandura, 1994)

Self-efficacy is determined by one's own experiences. Those who have gained higher levels of self-efficacy have done so by completing mastery experiences (Bandura, 1994). Higher levels of self-efficacy can also be produced through social models (Bandura, 1994). Here, individuals follow the paths of others that have already proven to be successful. High self-efficacy is also achieved through a strong motivational support system that believes in the individual (Bandura, 1994). These models can be incorporated by building higher levels of self-efficacy in teachers who work with students of learning disabilities.

In examining teacher self-efficacy with regards to teaching students with learning

disabilities, we are addressing confidence levels of teachers in inclusive education for LD students. This confidence reflects "the extent to which a teacher believes that he/ she can affect student performance" (Ryan, 2007, p. 12). He highlights that teacher self-efficacy has a direct relationship with student achievement and motivation. Teachers who demonstrate higher resilience in obstacles, show lower levels of stress and depression in demanding situations and implement solutions for classroom difficulties tend to have higher self-efficacy with regard to their own teaching (Ryan, 2007). Research also indicates that teachers who have lower levels of self- efficacy resist the inclusive model (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991). Studies also explore how low levels of self-efficacy have shaped teachers' attitudes towards learning disabilities, often leading to hostility toward inclusion. These experiences then tend to affect how teachers respond to students with learning disabilities (Schaefer, 2010, p. 36). Here, teachers are more likely to criticize students for incorrect responses and less likely self-examine their teaching strategies (Ryan, 2007). Teachers who showed higher levels of self-efficacy had higher levels of positive attitudes regarding classroom inclusion (Subban & Sharma, 2006). I would like to address how higher levels of teacher self-efficacy are equated with lower anxiety for teachers.

It is important when examining LD student success to examine the factors that contribute to it. Principals who hold strong leadership roles and higher understanding of transformational leadership have staff members with higher levels of teacher self-efficacy (Ryan, 2007). Teacher self-efficacy has been measured in relation to principal self-efficacy (Ryan, 2007). Principals' self-efficacy can reduce staff stress levels and develop a collective self-efficacy among teachers (Ryan, 2007). Principals are a source of knowledge, good classroom practice and they plan and initiate programs and maintain positive relationship with staff (Ryan, 2007). Through this trickle-down effect, teachers show stronger willingness to learn and implement new teaching strategies which provide stronger support for LD students (Ryan, 2007). Principals set attainable goals for teachers and provide access to professional development and professional feedback (Ryan, 2007). Principals address the need for more training for teachers in inclusive education. In 2008, a national survey on teacher readiness to identify or respond to diverse learning needs stated, "90% of Canadian school principals rank training in education assessment as very important, only 7% of them report that current graduates are prepared in this area" (Philpott & Chaill, 2008, p. 5). Research is needed to determine if a bottom- up approach could occur with teachers

influencing principal's levels of self-efficacy.

Teacher self-efficacy has also been measured with regards to the relationship between special education and the general education teacher in determining inclusive education for LD students. There is a reported separation between the special education teacher and the general education classroom. The special education teacher's self-perception within the classroom is that she is treated like an outsider (Young Buckley, 2004). Studies indicate that special education teachers perceive themselves as advocates and a protectors for students with learning disabilities (Young Buckley, 2004). Special education teachers do not view general education teachers as knowledgeable on special education (Young Buckley, 2004). Therefore, there is stress between special education teachers and general education teachers. General education teachers perceived special education teachers to be "too soft" on learning disabled students and would not give the students skills that would allow them to cope with "'real life' situations" (Young Buckley, 2004, p. 169). General education teachers reported holding learning disabled students to the same standards as non-learning disabled students. This was in their view for the benefit of the learning disabled student, "to prepare learning disabled students for the realities of real life." (Young Buckley, 2004) Special education teachers and general education teachers do not always have a mutual understanding of the best interests for the student with LD. Young Buckley (2004) addresses the effectiveness of the collaborative relationship between the general education teacher and special education teacher. It is important to identify this relationship as it affects teacher self-efficacy and LD student success. The increase in communication between special education teacher and general education teacher provides for an increase in modifications for LD students (Young Buckley, 2004). This research is important as it displays the importance of strong relationships between special education and general education to benefit the LD student success. As special education teachers are considered a resource for general education teachers in implementing corrective inclusive practices, with weak relationships this resource is ineffective. Special education teachers play an important role in the development of inclusive practices within the classroom. Therefore, perspectives of each other need to change in order to enhance success within the regular classroom environment.

Currently, the educational measures of knowledge through standardized testing have been difficult for both LD students and teachers. LD students have been identified as doing poorly on

their standardized tests compared to non-learning disabled students (Young Buckley, 2004). This may not reflect the knowledge that the student has on the subject, but rather indicates the barrier created by the ways in which the student is being tested. As Heward, (2002) states, "This could be caused by factors such as deficits in long and short- term memory, poor visual - motor integration skills, significant delays in reading and math skills and behavioral concerns such as anxiety or attention deficits" (as cited in Young Buckley, 2004, p. 41). Student's underachievement is not an accurate reflection of the student's potential. However, the internalization of these grades may result in lower self-esteem (Barksdale–Ladd & Thomas, 2000). This in turn affects student self - efficacy. The demands of standardized testing add another stress and pressure upon teachers to display student achievement. Teachers may not fully understand the reasons why LD students are performing poorly on standardized tests and place the blame of poor results on the student. Further research is necessary in determining the teacher's perspective on student's poor testing scores. To ensure equal access to student success, it is important to broaden the methods by which students can be tested. The effects of standardized testing go beyond the effects of test scores but also shape the activity within the classroom. It mandates what material the teacher is to focus their lessons on, it shapes the ways in which this knowledge is presented and it limits other ways of accessing knowledge in the process (Young Buckley, 2004).

Philpott and Chail (2008) call for a movement away from standardized testing. The trend to move away from standardized testing is currently present within countries such as Australia, Germany, Japan and the UK that "rely more on student's progress with curriculum than standardized test scores in the identification process" (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 3). Within this context, psychologists are seen as collaborators with teachers and parents, "focusing on how to help children learn more than 'test' students" (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 3).

Research Questions

In light of the literature reviewed, the aim of my thesis will be examining how to develop a strong understanding of learning disabilities and to provide proper resources for teachers to allow for equal access to education for LD students. By studying teacher self-efficacy, I will be examining teacher access to resources (i.e., in-service, out-service, funding and time allotted)

and their understanding of learning disabilities and inclusive practices. Through this process, I aim to highlight the importance of self-efficacy for teachers for the success of LD students. Guiding questions will include: How do levels of teacher self-efficacy affect inclusive education for LD students? What are the factors that are shaping low and high levels of teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education for LD students? How do teachers shape their understandings of LDs? What can be done to raise levels of teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education for LD students?

Based on the results of my research I will make recommendations to help provide education that is more inclusive for students with learning disabilities. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on students with learning disabilities, teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education. My research aim is to create a space for teachers to voice their concerns and needs for an effective practice in an inclusive education context. To do this, I would like to present myself as not only a researcher but as a collaborator and a resource person to teachers, in helping them to better understand learning disabled students. Most importantly, through my research and thesis report I aim to facilitate a shift in individual attitude towards students with learning disabilities through proper understanding of learning disabilities.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology used for this study. Described below are the benefits of using a qualitative method through narratives provided by teachers. I will go into detail with the presentation of my data collection through narrative descriptive write - up and thematic analysis. I will also detail the recruitment process, ethical issues and the limitations of my study.

Research Design

The purpose of my study is to further explore factors that contribute to creating inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms. Within this, I aim to explore the relationship between teachers' levels of self-efficacy, as previously defined by Bandura (1994), regarding LDs and how inclusive practices affects the application (i.e., teaching and learning) in the classroom. Therefore, my study also aims to explore the necessary resources for general education that would support teachers in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. In order to properly explore the factors that contribute to or create barriers to successful inclusive practices for SWLDs, it was essential to hear experiences from teachers on this topic. Through the qualitative approach of case studies, I was able to explore teachers' understandings, feelings and concerns about educating SWLD and creating inclusive classrooms.

By presenting each participating teacher's profile through narrative, I am able to present in-depth, rich descriptions of teachers' personal experiences in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Teacher profiles act as stories, following Glesnse's (2011) guidelines, my intention of profiles or short stories is "to represent the sense and feel, the complex emotions, and the dilemmas of everyday life, then the ethnographic short story can be an effective vehicle for entering that world" (Glesne, 2011, p. 260).

Thematic analysis is used to allow for connections between stories in order to properly present the current realities of creating inclusive classrooms for SWLD in elementary schools for general education teachers in the GTA. These themes will be common topics participants address and will be complementary to Bandura's four major processes for self–efficacy: cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

General education teachers have various experiences in creating inclusive practices based on their: available resources, education received, years of teaching experience, access to social mentors, and access to in-services. These can all contribute to levels of self-efficacy a teacher may have towards inclusive practices for SWLD but also their ability in providing an inclusive classroom. Since this topic is so diverse, having teacher profiles and narrative analysis allows for multiple perspectives from teachers.

Participants

Seven elementary school teachers and one educational consultant based in the GTA participated in this study. All participants had completed a Bachelor of Education, Ontario Teaching Certification and were teaching in classrooms with at least one student identified as LD. Participants varied in the number of years of teaching experience with SWLDs, levels of education on the topic of LDs, and access to resources, such as in-services and social mentors.

Participants were recruited through a snowball or networking technique. To provide diversity for the profiles, teacher participants were chosen from various elementary schools within the GTA. Schools were located in suburban and urban areas. Selecting multiple elementary sites was to ensure that participants varied in years of teacher experience, access to resources, educational background, and to provide for differences in school demographic. Through this, my aim was to recruit participants with varying levels of self-efficacy in teaching SWLDs.

I began to recruit participants while I was preparing my thesis proposal. During this time, I spoke to family, friends and former colleagues who work in the education field situated in the GTA. I visited schools and emailed potential participants who may be interested in contributing to my study on the topic of inclusive practices for SWLDs. I discussed with the potential participants the purpose of my research and gave a detailed description of their participation within the study. They were informed that participation will involve two surveys, two journals and one forty-five minute interview. Participants were made aware that their participation would be voluntary and confidential. Once my thesis proposal and ethics were approved, I began to meet with individual participants to develop a stronger rapport and initiate case studies.

Several teachers showed interest. Initially, seven teachers showed interest from three different elementary schools located in different areas in the GTA. Two participants withdrew

based on personal reasons. In hopes to find more diversity in levels of self-efficacy on creating inclusive classrooms for SWLD, I recruited two additional participants from another elementary school. A total of seven teachers participated in my study.

Seven out of eight participants were female. Participants' levels of teaching experience varied from four years to twenty years of experience. Seven teachers had completed their Bachelor of Education in Ontario and one teacher had completed her degree in the United States (US). Four teachers had previously worked in positions specific to special education prior to becoming general education classroom teachers. One teacher was currently working as a special education resource teacher and had prior experience as a general education teacher.

The Seven teacher participants were situated at four different elementary schools across the GTA. Two schools enrolled grades JK to grade eight and three schools had grades JK to grade six. The school enrollment rates ranged from 307 to 577 students (The Ontario Ministry of Education). Three participants worked in urban school settings at two different school locations. These schools both shared high ESL rates, as the majority of students did not have English as a first language (70.6% and 76.4%) and are from families new to Canada (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). At one location, about half of the students came from low-income families. Two participants worked at a school located in the suburban area of the GTA. This school hosted the highest percentage of SWLDs at 25.7%. This is significantly higher than the provincial average of 13.1% (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). This school had the lowest percentage of low-income housing at only 7%. Two participants worked at a school located in a rural area of the GTA (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Most students attending this school location were born in Canada and have English as their first language. The percentage of this school's student population living in lower-income households is 19%, which is just above the provincial average of 16.5% (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). All schools hold high performance grades according to the Grade Three Student Achievement Report from 2009 - 2010. Students receiving special education services ranges from 11.1% - 25.7% (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Method

Each participant completed one survey (Appendix D) on inclusive attitudes towards special needs students, two written journals and one forty - five minute interview. The interview explored knowledge base of LDs and creating inclusive practices for SWLDs with resources provided. To allow for various mediums for participants to express their stories I choose methods that were both written (i.e., journals) and oral (i.e., interview).

During the initial meeting, each potential participant signed consent forms and was provided both survey questions and journal questions. These meetings allowed a time for me to build a relationship with the participant and to create a time table for the completion of the survey, first journal, and second journal. Phase one journal had roughly a two week timeline for completion. Phase two journals were provided a month timeline to allow for reflection to occur about classroom experiences with SWLDs. These timelines were flexible to meet the needs of the participants. The majority of participants' survey and journal responses were collected via email correspondence. By request, two participants' survey and journal responses were collected in person. All eight interviews were conducted in-person in June, July and August 2011 in the GTA. With participant permission, all interviews were audio - recorded. To provide comfort, all participants were included in the decision process of where and when the interview would be conducted. Six interviews were conducted at schools during teachers' off time (i.e., lunch or after school). Two interviews were conducted at a participants' home. Two participants preferred a group interview and participated in their interview together. One interview experienced technical difficulties in audio recording. Notes documented during interview sufficed in recording participant's answers.

The interview process was conducted according to Rubin and Rubin's (2005) guidelines, which state that the interview process is to be conducted in three phases:

> In the first phase of the interview, the research introduces him - or her and the topic and makes an effort to build the confidence of the interviewee and establish some trust. In the middle of the interview, the researcher presents the more emotional or intellectually difficult questions. Towards the end, the researcher reduces the intensity of the discussion. In practice, these stages might take place over several different interviews and often blur into one another. (p. 114, Rubin & Rubin, 2005)

As my interview process unfolded, the three phases of the interview flowed organically one after the other.

Journals were divided into two sections, phase one and phase two, which were completed in two journaling periods. Journal phases reflected two separate types of inquiry. The first phase was to get to know the demographic of the participant and to gain an understanding of what factors contribute to their knowledge base on LDs and inclusive practices. The focus of the second phase was to create a grand-tour of the classroom and everyday practices. This phase was to help identify stressors and successes to inclusive practices for SWLDs in general classrooms. Both journal phases were designed to link teaching practices in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs to teacher levels of self-efficacy. Participants' journal timeline was roughly a two week period for phase one and a one month period for phase two. However, some teachers completed their journals earlier and later than the provided time lines. The time allotted was provided to accommodate for teachers' busy schedule and to allow for a reflection period between journal phases. When presenting journals to teachers, I highlighted the voluntary nature of the project and that it was not necessary to answer any questions that provided discomfort. The journal questions were semi-structured to enable discussion on topics that spoke most to the participant. When presenting journal questions, I also encouraged teachers to respond to the questions that they identified most with and to discuss any experiences on inclusive practices for SWLD that may not have been addressed by the provided questions. During the journaling phase, teachers were encouraged to contact me freely via email for any clarification. Ultimately, the journals were used as a medium of communicating the realities of creating inclusive practices for SWLDs given the availability of resources. They also served as a jumping-off point for interviews, which allowed for clarification and elaboration of journal responses.

Interviews were kept open to ensure participants had an outlet to tell their stories. A set of guiding questions were prepared for each interview. Some questions were contextual based on the relationship of self-efficacy and inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Other questions reflected on individual journal responses. These questions were created with the intention to enable an opening to the discussion of their experiences related to the process of inclusive classrooms for LD students. My aim was to conduct the interviews as conversations hoping that the participants

would focus on the topics that were most important to them. Following the interview guidelines of Rubin and Rubin (2005):

> Interviews are structured conversations. You organize an interview by combining main questions, follow - up questions and probes. Main questions are worked out in advance to make sure you cover all the major parts of your research problem, whereas the follow - up questions ask for explanation of themes, concepts or events that the interviewee has introduced. Probes help manage the conversation by keeping it on topic, signaling the desired level of depth, and asking examples for clarification. The main questions help you make sure you are answering your research puzzle; the follow - up questions and probes ensure that you get depth, detail, vividness, richness and nuance.
> (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.129)

This method was used to ensure that participants could bring to my study new perspectives that I had not considered previously. Therefore, the design of the interview questionnaire was open-ended to avoid "yes / no answers". At the commencement of all interviews, participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and that it was not necessary to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. All participants were made aware of the confidentiality of their participation and that their name, school names, or any student or colleagues names would not be mentioned in the thesis write-up or noted in any verbal reference.

During the interview process, I was actively conscious of my role as a researcher. It was very important for me that**,** as a researcher, I did not change participants' stories or views on the topic but heard their voice. When participant spoke, I became an active listener. I tried to create an environment in which the teachers could feel safe to tell their stories. Therefore, throughout the interviews, I was conscious to not over take the conversation. Furthermore, I provided supportive responses through body language, by maintaining eye contact, smiling and nodding. I also used supportive verbal cues, such as "right" or "yes". After the teacher was finished with their response, I would ask probing questions or continue on to the next question which was most similar in nature to the last response given by the participant. At times, when necessary, I showed empathy towards the participant for the stressors they faced in creating inclusive practices with the resources necessary. After each interview, and during the phase of transcription, I was reflective about the effect of my presence on the interview. Ruben & Ruben (2005) refer to this process as evaluating the interview. I used the time after interviews to

examine how I can self-improve as an interviewer. I noticed in my first interview, I interrupted the interviewee and used "um" often. During the next interview, I actively limited my responses and waited for the interviewee to pause until proceeding and was conscious in correcting the presentation of my questions for the next interview.

Initially, two questionnaires were to be completed by participants. Wilczenski's (1992) Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education Scale (Appendix D) was to be administered twice; once at the beginning of each case study and once at the completion. This was used to examine participants' attitudes towards LD and inclusive practices for special education. This questionnaire consists of sixteen questions. This scale calibrates the degree that the respondent agrees or disagrees with inclusion of special needs students in general education classrooms. Many participants expressed discomfort with the survey. They felt that the measurement of their views towards the inclusion could not be accurately expressed in a scale of numbers. Many felt that a student is not necessarily identified only by their disability but also by the uniqueness of all components of an individual. Many participants wrote comments along with the identified number responses. One participant was unable to complete the survey based on the nature of the survey. Therefore, I only found it necessary to administer this survey once. This survey did provide some insight into each participant's attitude towards inclusive education.

Identifying as a SWLD, I was able to add an additional insight into the topic of LDs and inclusive practices. Through the case study process, I was reflective of my own personal experiences in relation to participants' accounts. However, through this process, I was reflective of my own personal bias. I value and honor all participants' insights, experiences and understandings of LDs and inclusive practices. Both our experiences shape the realities of the classroom but from two different angles. Through the case study process, I was conscious of my experiences influencing the participants' stories. Throughout this process, I acknowledge the teachers as the experts on the topic. I often encouraged participants through acknowledging their expertise and their unique experiences as teachers. I believe that participant and I were collaborators of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected by a one-time survey questionnaire, one forty-five minute interview, journal responses, personal journal responses and literature review. Each interview was tape

recorded and transcribed. Previous to the interviews, I had met each participant in person to go over details of their contribution in the study and to address any concerns. I was cognizant of the way that I presented myself at each school setting. Some school settings were more formal than others and I tried to reflect this in my dress. The time spent in schools allowed the participant and me to get to know each other and develop a rapport. One school invited me to several school events where I got to know better the school, community and staff. This time was used with the aims of building relationships. At interviews, it was important for me to have a small conversation prior to the start of interviews to get to know each participant better and to create a comfortable situation for participants.

After each individual interview, I wrote my own personal journal responses. These reflected things that may have been said that were not audio recorded. I also took this time to write about the setting of the interview and any feelings that may have arisen during my visit. Personal journal responses also allowed me to explore my own feelings and reflect on any personal bias. During my thesis process, I also wrote on-going personal journals. These journals could be quick notes on a particular feeling, experience or thought I had towards my thesis topic. I also wrote journal notes after casual conversations with non - participants on my thesis topic. These journals expressed feelings and thoughts reflected from these conversations. Personal journal responses were documented in a notebook, notes on my phone or on my computer.

Data collection was done via email and in person. This information was stored on my computer hard drive and printed out to be put in binders labeled “Thesis” and “Teacher Profiles". These binders held different sections to help organize themes in my research. To avoid misinterpretation, participants were shown their final teacher profiles. After the one forty-five minute interview, I aimed to continue a rapport with participants to keep myself available in case of any necessary follow-up interviews to ensure accuracy in my study.

Through narrative analysis, I also created two additional unique narratives. As a SWLD who experienced elementary school in the GTA, I described my own experiences of inclusive practices in general classrooms for SWLDs. I composed my narrative analysis from answering my own journal and interview questions. I included my own narrative to add a perspective of a student and provide an additional perspective of inclusive practices for SWLDs. The additional narrative was added to speak to the voice of an expert. This narrative was written based on the

interview and journal responses of an educator who works in the GTA as a consultant to elementary schools. This participant has had experience working as an administrator of elementary schools, school psychologist, teacher and ministry consultant. I added these voices to my study to provide multiple angles to access the realities of inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms in the GTA.

Ethical Issues

There are no serious risks involved in my research study. Prior to the start of all case studies, participants were notified of the purpose of the study, their role in participation and any risks and benefits of the study. Participants were aware that the study was confidential and voluntary. Each participant was labeled with a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Prior to the start of surveys, journals and interviews, participants were aware that they did not have to answer any questions that provided discomfort. Participants were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me or my advisor by phone or email. All participants signed consent forms prior to the commencement of their participation.

Limitations

In gaining participants through the snowball technique, I found most participants had similar levels of education and experience in special education and inclusive practices for SWLDs. It was very difficult for me to find novice teachers with less educational background on the topic, with fewer years experience in the classroom. In stating this, my study only explored the perspective of eight teachers. Higher numbers of participants may have revealed other, more diverse experiences in the classroom that were not explored in my study.

In addition, four participants made comments regarding knowing my father who is a prominent figure in elementary schools in the GTA. Attempting to go outside the networks of my father, I recruited two additional teachers. However, one of these teachers still asked me if I was my father's daughter, using his name in the interview. Some teachers made joking comments on the need to impress my father or made reference to his importance. While conducting case studies I reflected if this aspect would affect participants' behavior or answers. Ultimately, through data collection, it was evident that this did not affect most teachers' ability to express their genuine concerns and experiences.

In speaking to participants about inclusive practices for SWLDs, often participants

assumed that this included all special needs students. For example, many teachers would talk about students with autistism, MID, DD and hearing impairments when asked specifically about SWLDs. It was not evident if participants assume that all special needs students have learning disabilities or that they are accustomed to discussing and grouping SWLDs with all special needs students. It was also difficult to tell if this trend was occurring as a result of poor education on LDs or if it was out of habit due to systemic practice of grouping all special needs children into one category. It was also clear from the data analysis that each SWLD accesses classroom material differently. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the many factors in creating inclusive classrooms for all SWLDs. However, I do feel it is important for teachers to properly understand the differences within LD spectrum and how this might affect individual learning to ensure equity within the classroom.

Lastly, I had to ask myself if my selection and presentation of questions influenced participants' responses. Although the study was structured to allot time for reflection in between journals and interviews, I questioned participants ability to practice reflection if not accustomed to do so.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the realities of creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs in elementary general classroom teachers in the GTA. Participants were asked to reflect on the realities of creating inclusive practices for SWLDs with the resources that they can access. Most importantly, my aim was to describe the relationship between self - efficacy and teaching practice in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. This enabled the exploration of the current realities of the inclusive classroom for SWLDs.

Conducting qualitative case studies allowed me to properly explore these questions through the perspective of seven teachers in GTA elementary schools who had at least one SWLD in their classrooms. I was able to recruit participants through the snowball or network technique. My focus was eight case studies. Each case study included the completion of one survey, two journal responses and one forty - five minute interview. Participants varied in educational background, years of experience and access to resources on the topic of LDs and inclusive classrooms for LD students. Literature review and personal journals also contributed to data.

Data was collected by survey, two journals, interviews, personal journals and literature review. Survey was used to gain insight to participants' attitudes towards inclusion of SWLDs. Journals and interviews were used in data collection to allow for participants to express their stories both verbally and orally. Journals assisted in interviews to allow for a jumping - off point for elaboration and clarification. Interviews were open - ended to ensure the participants were able to recount their experiences. As a researcher, my aim was to conduct myself in a manner that allowed the participants to each tell their own story without being influenced by my own personal bias.

Using narrative analysis in teacher profiles allowed me to display each participant's experience in rich description. These narratives provided for a variety of teachers' experiences allowing comparison of experiences through thematic analysis.

My study faced certain challenges due to the small participant sample size. It was difficult for me to secure teachers with lower levels of education and few years of experience working with LDs in inclusive settings. A study with a higher number of participants may provide a more in - depth description of how teacher self - efficacy regarding LD students and inclusive settings shape teacher practice. Several participants made comments on knowing my father, an "expert" in the GTA elementary school system. As a result, I questioned participants' truthfulness in responses. However, upon completion of case studies it was evident that participants responses were open and honest.

Participants did demonstrate difficulties in narrowing their responses to only SWLDs. Instead participants tended to lump all students with special needs into the category of LDs. It was also difficult to determine the effect my own questions had in shaping participants' responses. As well, I wonder whether teachers had enough time for reflection, given the constant daily rigor devoted to teaching.

Chapter Three – Teacher Profile

In this chapter, I will present the data in detail, through the profiles of the seven teachers and one education consultant who participated in this study. The teachers who participated are: Mia, Margaret Kelly, Demi, Amy, Leah, Janet and Amanda and Danny, who was the eighth person interviewed, an education consultant. I will give each profile separately in order to give a good feel for the data as I collected it. I am also presenting a brief discussion of Wilczenski's (1992) questionnaire, Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education (ATIE) which I used to gain an understanding of participants' attitudes towards inclusive education. Each participant was asked to complete the 16 questions in this questionnaire. But I soon realized that this was not a very good idea. Nevertheless I will share some insights gained towards the end of this chapter. The next chapter will be a chapter of analysis of the data trying to extract significant themes from each of the profile narratives presented in this chapter.

Mia

Mia completed a Bachelor of Education and Masters of Education in the United States of America (USA) in 2003. In addition, Mia has taken several courses including: Reading Specialist, Special Education Part One, and courses on differentiated instruction. Mia's focus in her Masters of Education was on Special Education. Mia has five years of teaching experience and five years of experience working with SWLDs. Mia is a white female between the ages of 31 - 40. She is a grade three teacher in a school located in a community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Currently, Mia has two students who are identified with an LD.

School demographics. Mia works in a school that is located in a primarily white community within the GTA. The school offers grades Junior Kindergarden (JK) to five, with a total population of 356 students. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education 2009 - 2010 student achievement reports, the schools achievement rate is high in reading (85%), writing (83%) and math (85%). As reported by The Ontario Ministry of Education, a majority of students in this school are born in Canada and have English as their first language. The student population consists of 19% of students who live in lower - income households, which is just above the provincial average of 16.5%. Also, 12.9% of the student population receive special education services (The Ontario Ministry of Education , 2010).

Learning experiences. Mia gained her knowledge regarding learning disabilities prior to

becoming a teacher through her experiences as a volunteer at a learning resource room at an inner-city school. Mia spent three years volunteering at the learning resource room working with students with Learning Disability (LD), Developmental Delayed(DD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). While completing her Bachelor of Education, she took one course which broadly addressed several learning exceptionalities focusing on the inclusive classroom. This course had a strong focus on reading intervention. She felt this course might have gone more in depth with LDs, but stated that "nothing fully prepares you for the classroom." Mia was driven to complete her Special Education Part One course and differentiated instruction courses in order to ensure she was meeting the needs of her students. She acknowledges that these courses help deepen her understanding of LDs and inclusive practices. Mia took her Special Education Part One course online with other teachers across Canada. She felt this was beneficial since this course introduced her to learning strategies that other teachers used to create inclusive practices. Mia found this course to be beneficial in learning the theory about LDs. Mia states,

> Having learned the 'theory' behind several disabilities allowed me to prepare for my practice teaching block....which was also in the inner city! Although the theory never fully prepares you for what you encounter in the classroom, it does provide a foundation. (Mia, 2011)

Connecting the theory with practice, *Mia* describes it as "lights going on," as she was able to link certain characteristics of different LDs to different inclusive practices in order to properly assist students. Mia views experience as significant in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. *Mia* believes that no two students are the same, and by working with students her knowledge and abilities increase.

> My comfort level has increased as I have become more familiar with the curriculum in the primary and now junior grade levels. My ability has also increased as a result of discussion with colleagues who share the same passion for inclusion. (Mia, 2011)

Resource teacher. Mia has found dialoguing with colleagues and sharing experiences to be valuable resources in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Mia values the Learning

Resource Teacher (LRT) as an important resource. She is able to meet with her informally on a daily basis. These visits are used to collaborate with creating inclusive practices for students. The LRT also assists and co-writes SWLDs' IEPs. Mia acknowledges the efforts of her LRT and current administrator in providing a wealth of knowledge about inclusive practices for SWLD. In addition, the school also supports SWLDs through technology, such as computers and laptops which have programs to assist students in classrooms.

IEPs. Mia reviews her IEPs three times a year and refers to them whenever needed. She finds the IEPs fairly accessible and indicates that the strengths and needs are very clear. With teaching experience, she has gained a better understanding of IEPs (i.e., the psychological jargon), but does find that in the beginning years of teaching "might take a little bit getting used to the terminology and acronyms that are used" (Mia, 2011). Mia finds IEPs useful in creating a paper trail for the student to document progress and the learning needs of that particular student. Mia is able to make accommodations daily that are listed on IEPs. As a primary teacher, Mia is involved in the beginning process of identifying students. Therefore, she may not always have the paper trail for all students as she undergoes the process of identification which involves finding out what are the learning needs of the specific student.

School board policy and inclusive practices. Mia finds the school board policy on inclusive practices easily accessible. She feels that individual schools may focus on the areas of inclusion which are most important to the school needs. Mia states:

> So you receive greater supports, different initiatives to help support you in the classroom. So it depends on what the parents have to say about their child's needs as well. Again, if you are in different places in the board, if you're in the inner city, it might not be, even if you had a parent speak out, I don't know if the resources would be brought (Mia, 2011).

However, Mia feels that the board does try to support teachers as much as possible and for the number of needs present, they do a good job. She highlights that there are a number of various interventions that support inclusion in the classroom and equity. Needs do vary and are dependent on what needs are most predominant in that area. Different schools have different needs.

In-services. Mia has attended in- services (i.e., educational sessions for upgrading skills on the job) focused on LD students. She finds them helpful and easily accessible. She believes that her board provides the resources necessary for teachers to create inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Mia mentions that she can take in-services on differentiated instructional practices or speak to consultants who could come to her classroom and assist her with any particular student intervention for individual LD students. However, there can be a wait for these services but eventually a consultant will attend the classroom and help her plan for that student. She states that attending in-service sessions is not mandatory and teachers will take part in the sessions that meet the needs of their classroom. An administrator may suggest different in-services based on the needs of the students in their classroom. These in-services are system-sponsored and a supply teacher would be provided for the teacher to be released to attend the in-service session. Mia also indicates that there are many after school in-services that teachers can take on their own time to build their knowledge base about inclusive practices for SWLDs. Mia finds that these in services provide strategies that are fairly relevant and applicable in the classroom. However, she also indicates that the access to these in-services may vary based on the teacher's role in the school; certain teachers assigned to specific roles may have more access to in-service and it may be more difficult to get classroom teachers out of the classroom to these sessions.

Mia believes that technology (i.e., student laptops with internet service) could be key in creating inclusive classrooms for all students, including SWLDs. For example, students with fine motor LD or who have difficulties with their thoughts or organization (i.e., working memory LDs) require computers to have equal access to classroom learning. Other programs, such as ones that allow text-to-speech and graphic organizers are also essential. Mia also points out the importance of internet to allow for research access. She states that these services, if kept in the classroom, are beneficial for all students. However, Mia feels that technologies are not always easily available. Students have to first meet certain criteria in order to get assistive technology. Therefore, SWLDs first have to go through the psychological assessment process and then a claim would be sent in for the technology services. Parent advocacy can play a key role in receiving these services, as well as delivery in a more timely fashion. This is the first year that Mia has had assistive technology in the classroom for a student.

Working with SWLDs. To increase successful inclusive practices for SWLDs, Mia

makes the following suggestions: planning time aligned with a teacher partner, regular classroom visits by subject- specific consultants to ensure teacher performance is meeting the needs of students, as well as monthly meetings with grade divisions to contribute to creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Mia indicates that a major stressor in SWLD success can be a lack of parental support. She has worked in two different schools with different school demographics that provided different levels of support. From these experiences, she has noticed the differences in levels of parental involvement, knowledge and interest regarding LDs. At her previous school, she mentions that adult illiteracy rates were high and that her students were not getting the support needed to complete their homework at home. Currently, she works at a school where parents advocate for their children and are well versed on LD issues. Mia creates her inclusive classroom for SWLD through differentiated instruction and planning for multiple learners in the classroom. Technology also helps greatly in creating an inclusive classroom for SWLDs.

Margaret Kelly

Margaret Kelly has completed a Bachelor of English, Bachelor of Education, Specialist in Special Education and Specialist in Reading in the province of Ontario. Margaret completed her Bachelor of Education in 1991. She has twenty years teaching experience and twenty years experience of working with SWLDs. Throughout Margaret's teaching career, she has had ongoing education and training in effective classroom instruction and taught students with diverse needs (eg. Autism). In order to receive her Specialist in Special Education degree, Margaret completed three courses including Behavior and Gifted components. She considers her Specialist degree significant in securing her current job as a Learning Resource Teacher (LRT). Margaret also has teaching experience as a teacher in an LD classroom.

Margaret Kelly is a white female between the ages of 41 – 50. She works as her school's LRT and does not instruct a class of her own. She works as a resource for teachers and students regarding Special Education. Margaret reports that her school has five formally identified students with LDs and approximately twenty students who have difficulties learning in regular classrooms that are not formally identified.

School demographics. Margaret Kelly works at the same school as Mia and shares the same school demographics.

Education. During Margaret Kelly's completion of her Bachelor of Education in 1991,

one special education course was provided which she elected to take. Classes involved two hours in-class instruction per week over a six month period. Prior to becoming a teacher, Margaret did not anticipate the need for education in inclusive practices for SWLD or education on LDs. Margaret realized the importance of education for inclusive practices for SWLD and LDs during everyday teaching practice in stating, “only when you get into teaching do you begin to learn about the needs of the unique learner" (Margaret Kelly, 2011).

Learning experiences. Margaret Kelly gained her understanding of LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs through education knowledge base, experience and classroom learning. She describes her understandings of LDs as an “ongoing practice that never ends" (Margaret Kelly, 2011). She continues to learn about LDs and inclusive practices by observing students, reading reports and by dialoguing with the experts in her field. Margaret Kelly also finds parents to be an important resource in properly identifying SWLDs. As the school LRT, she assists teachers in creating I.E.P.s for SWLD. Margaret Kelly gains her understanding of inclusive practices from reports, recommendations and information from parents and teachers and observation. Social models also assist in creating a better understanding of LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Margaret Kelly states the importance of visiting other classrooms, working with parents, psychologists, and consultants to gain expertise on how to help students.

> We are privileged with the opportunity to consult with special services from the board e.g. Character Network Programs, consultants, social workers, who gives us experience and strategies to count on. (Margaret Kelly, 2011)

She also believes that constant teacher dialogue is important “to share learning and experiences based upon their work with students" (Margaret Kelly, 2011).

Attitudes regarding inclusive practices. Currently Margaret believes that learning about LDs and inclusive practice for SWLD is absolutely necessary for teacher practice. She recognizes that all general education classrooms have students with varying learning needs, including SWLDs. Therefore, it is important for all teachers to have the tools to address students’ needs. This includes knowing proper techniques about creating inclusive practices, having a knowledge base and being educated about the educational laws and rights of the students. Margaret Kelly has positive attitudes towards inclusion for SWLDs. She believes that it is the student’s right to be included in the regular classroom with equity services. Students who have

IEPs have the right to appropriate classroom programming and possible separate classroom instruction if necessary. Through these responses, it is clear that Margaret Kelly acts as an advocate for the needs of SWLDs at her school. She does indicate that in order for inclusion to work teachers and students need to have proper support.

Margaret Kelly believes that inclusive practices for SWLDs would increase with more availability of supportive technology and also, for information on students' reports to be used more frequently and effectively on a case by case basis. Other factors that can continue to reduce stressors include experience, visiting other classes and working with parents and other support staff to gain expertise.

Stressors. Margaret Kelly experiences unique stressors specific to her position as the school's LRT. One stressor is to create IEPs to make sure they support legislation and have accommodations that suit student's specific needs. Lack of knowledge base about specific LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs can create stress when creating specific accommodations for individual LDs. For example, Margaret Kelly states, "Student has slow processing speed: what does that mean?" (Margaret Kelly, 2011). Understanding these problems is necessary in order to be able to modify classroom activities so SWLDs can access the curriculum in the classroom. Time is also indicated as a stressor in order to support students, as it is needed to create extensions and modify activities.

Demi

Demi completed her Bachelor of Education in Ontario in 1997. Demi completed her undergrad B.Sc in Exceptionality in Human Learning. This program explored issues and concerns for individuals with disabilities and/or who are gifted. Demi has 15 years of teaching experience and within this period has worked 11-15 years with SWLDs. Demi is a white female between the ages of 31- 40. Demi is an eighth grade teacher who currently teaches six students who have been identified with LDs and who have I.E.P.s.

School demographics. Demi works at a JK to grade eight elementary school, which has a student population of 307. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education reports, the student population is composed of students from middle to high income households who have been born in Canada. There is a low percentage of low income housing (7%) and immigrant students (2%). The school has a high population of students who receive special education services (25.7%) in

comparison to the province average of 13.1%. The Ontario Ministry of Education grade three student achievement reports of 2009 - 2010 show that the school student's averages in reading (84%), writing (80%) and math (80%) are significantly higher than the provincial averages (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Education. Demi did not take and was not offered any special education courses in her B.Ed. program exploring LDs or inclusive practices for SWLDs. Demi feels that her B.Ed. program only spent approximately 10% of the time exploring LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. However, during the completion of her B.Ed., Demi did feel it was important to explore LDs and inclusive practices as it is a "major component of successful teaching" (Demi, 2011). Demi describes her whole B.Ed. experience as lacking and felt that she learned the most after graduating.

Learning experiences. Prior to becoming a teacher and completing her B.Ed., Demi did anticipate a need for training in inclusive practices for SWLDs. These philosophies were influenced by Demi's undergrad educational background in Exceptionality in Human Learning. This program offered a variety of courses geared towards exceptionalities. It was unique in that it allowed for hands-on learning in which Demi was able to go into classrooms to work with students with exceptionalities. Guest speakers were frequent. They explored the perspectives of parents, those of individuals with exceptionalities, as well as those of teachers who worked with LD students. It allowed Demi to enter into the field of teaching being well-versed in the language of special education, gave her experience working with SWLDs and she was exposed to multiple perspectives of exceptionalities. Demi indicates that being exposed to multiple perspectives has greatly influenced her teaching practices for SWLDs. Also having friends, who are parents with children with LDs, has given her insight into the experience of parents with an LD child. These perspectives have guided her approach with parents of LD students. For example, her friend's child received a report card that she felt was very negative. After reflection on the negative report given to the child, Demi questioned her own evaluation practices in creating reports for SWLDs. Demi states:

> It's just interesting as a teacher, because we write these report cards so removed from how someone might feel when reading them. Because they are so standardized, you are pulling comments from here and comments from there. And when I saw that negative report, I thought the teacher had made pronouncements like God. I hope I didn't write

> anything like that for one of my exceptional students. Because they really read these report cards like you are writing about their child directly. And you should be, but they don't realize that you are pulling down comments from a bank. (Demi, 2011)

Now Demi feels that she will approach these situations by being more positive in her delivery of evaluation and she will focus on areas of improvement in a sensitive manner.

Stressors. As a grade eight teacher, Demi faces stressors specific to her grade level. Demi finds intermediate grades unique in that it is the only division that does not have a half-day withdrawal program available. Students, who have spent their junior division years being withdrawn to spend fifty percent of their time in a smaller classroom receiving one-on-one support, are now integrated into larger, full-day general education classrooms without the extra supports that were previously offered. In intermediate grades, students who were attending a half-day withdrawal program in primary and junior divisions are now provided with a forty- five minute Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) support program. These withdrawal classes are not exclusively for LD students. They also serve students with DD and Mildly Intellectually Disabled (MID). LD students who attend these classrooms, are academically performing two to three grade levels below grade placement. Demi faces the stress of teaching these students who are now integrated back into full-day classes who have been accustomed to the support offered in smaller classes. Demi believes there is a need for more support for these students in intermediate grades. She points out that there are more intensive programs for students in junior grades and at the high school level but the service is insufficient for intermediate students. As an intermediate teacher, Demi also states that parental concerns of SWLDs change. There is a focus on the students' access to education at the high school level. Demi helps parents and students make the transition to high school by informing them of the programs that are available and directing them to speak to guidance counselors and special education teachers at the high school concerning these programs.

As an intermediate teacher, Demi also faces scheduling issues. She indicates that there is a scheduling issue with students being withdrawn for forty-five minute periods for other grade levels. Demi states:

> I don't have the problem that they have to go out on a SERC placement but definitely pertaining to SERT placements. Our SERT teacher takes them out for math and language.

> So your math and language time has to correspond with his math and language time. But he does not just teach your students, he teaches all grade four to seven students and so now you have all four to seven teachers are having the same time for math and language, because their French time interrupting their gym times, are all different, so there is a scheduling nightmare that happens around that. (Demi, 2011)

Ultimately, Demi seems to have more flexibility when her SERT teacher sees her students.

IEPs. Demi feels that IEPs are a little bit difficult to understand and are geared more for teachers than for parents. Demi does take part in the development of the IEPs with the help of the resource teacher, and feels that this assists her in better understanding IEPs. She does not feel that she has to refer to students' IEPs often, as she has created them, but does use them as a means for making sure that needs and accommodations are being met. She does find them helpful in identifying what works for the specific student. Demi recognizes IEPs as a legal document. She does find them a little bit too long in length and considers them a lot of paper work. Demi also mentions that IEPs do make it look like it is possible to allow the classroom to become a program that creates an inclusive classroom for all students. However, she states that this is not realistic with the programs available. She finds that it is 100% necessary to make accommodations daily. These accommodations have to be specific to the needs of the individual student.

Resource teacher. Demi finds her resource teacher to be a huge contributor to creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. They meet informally on a daily basis. During this time, they plan and brainstorm for the week. This includes discussions concerning modified tests, assignments and lesson plans. Demi provides the resource teacher her tests a week in advance and she makes modifications to them in accordance with each student's IEP Demi also feels her administrator who was previously the special education consultant for her school board is a strong resource. Her school also has a teacher-partner program, which enables teachers to

dialogue about accommodations and modifications for students. However, her school is small and not everyone is able to have a teacher -partner.

In-services. Demi has not attended any in-services regarding LD students and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Demi is aware that this type of professional development is offered, but often a fee is charged for these workshops. Demi expresses that teachers in Catholic schools have mandatory courses in religion and teachers with Autistic children in their classes are required to take workshops focused on Autism. Yet, it is not mandatory to take any courses for LD students and inclusive practices for SWLDs. She states that it is not practical to assume that teachers are able to afford nine hundred dollars to take Special Education courses. This is especially true for newly-graduated teachers, who may benefit the most from the course, but are least able to afford it. Demi also highlights that are very few in-services provided during the school day. As she states:

> Yah P.D days are almost none now. They are really reduced to nothing. I think we have like six in a year and three of those days are report card writing days. So we have like three and one is faith day. So now we have two and so not a lot.. I mean it comes up at staff meetings. It comes up as conversations but it's not... It's - there are too many other things going on. (Demi, 2011)

However, Demi does recognize that teachers are provided with lots of resources, but it is up to the teacher to access them. She states:

> ..they have lots of resources, but it's almost always left up to you to attain them. To read them. You're given all the inclusive practices booklets that you can imagine. Like there's text book after text book, document after document. But first year teaching, you don't have the time to read manuals - because you are just trying to teach your day. (Demi, 2011)

Demi also stressed the importance of building other practices that are important to the classroom. For example, she feels that it is important to know how to long-range plan or to be able to give three-part lessons in math. She feels that she can't just spend all her time focusing on

learning one thing (i.e., how to accommodate LD students). She states that as a teacher, you need to be an expert in everything. But it is a challenge, especially for new teachers who have not already gained experience. Although Demi states that written resources are available, she also states that the in-service is not. She notes that, as teachers, you spend a lot of time in the classroom, making important decisions on your own. Demi suggests team-teaching or teacher-mentor programs to assist teachers in the classroom. Brainstorming with others is helpful in gaining multiple perspectives and sharing ideas. Demi states:

> But in our world, you are really in that classroom on your own. And sometimes it's after the fact that you get advice. And so that's a bit tricky. I mean you learn from it for the next one, but it's often after the fact. You know this is what happened - this is what I did - you know what would you do in this situation? But it's too late for the situation. So you know for new teachers (who haven't had experience) it really is - I would think - a lot of stress for them. (Demi, 2011)

Demi was fortunate to have a volunteer graduate student whose focus was on special education who helped in her classroom. She found this to be very helpful, having a second person who was knowledgeable in the area of special education in the classroom. She feels that having educated volunteers or having a program involving teacher-mentors for new teachers may result in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs.

Demi feels that Special Education Additional Qualifications courses should be free of charge in order to allow all teachers access to these valuable resources. Demi also mentions that classroom teachers should spend more time planning with resource teachers. As well, more Educational Resource Workers (ERWs) and SERT teachers should be made available to students and teachers as this would be helpful in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. In addition, Demi mentions the importance of moving away from the perspective that one form of practice in the classroom is sufficient. More accommodated programs and options should be available to provide equity for the individual student needs.

Stressors. Demi faces many stressors in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Problems with time management and large classroom sizes are two of her biggest stressors. She needs to manage her time carefully in order to meet all students' individual needs. The large class size makes her job more difficult. Demi states:

> I'm trying to manage all their needs while not still dealing with the other students. Giving every child your attention is the most challenging. Not to mention the extra work load attached with modifying work and the meetings that are needed for these students. (Demi, 2011)

Demi attributes her strong classroom management skills to being able to create an inclusive classroom for SWLDs. Her ability to control the class allows her to spend "more time teaching and helping and not disciplining" (Demi, 2011). Demi has created more on-task group work and has created classroom lessons that have multiple accommodations for individual students.

Demi does note the complex formula required for the successful implementation of inclusive practices for SWLDs. Demi believes that there are many factors that contribute to success in the classroom and that there is a wide spectrum of LDs. Demi does not believe that general education classrooms are suited for all students and that for some specific cases, students should be placed in contained classrooms for the betterment of that student. Demi believes that not "one thing is good for everyone" and that teachers have to look at the LD and the person when considering what is best for that individual. Demi states:

> You know if you're autistic, yes we have a program for you, if you're DD - yes we have programs for you, but short of those people that fall in-between we don't really have a lot. It's a questioning of finding those programs (Demi, 2011).

She goes on to state that because of the lack of these programs, it seems as though the LD child who is put into the regular classroom does not always benefit as a learner.

The teacher's role in inclusive practice. Demi believes the role of a teacher in teaching SWLDs includes providing "differentiated instruction, modifying programs, creating study guides, helping write IEPs and constantly anticipating the ongoing needs of each student." Demi believes that she has built her knowledge base regarding LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs through mentors (principals, support staff), meetings (staff meetings, divisional meetings), educational material (literature), professional development, and from interactions with students and parents of students with LDs. Demi does feel that her board provides her accessible resources which inform her about creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. These resources include documents and support material. However, to use of these resources is dependent upon

teacher initiative.

Amy

Amy holds a Bachelor's degree with Honors in Biology and General Psychology. In 1995, Amy graduated from her Bachelor of Education program in the province of Ontario. She has also completed a Master of Education and additional qualification courses including: Special Education Part One with an LD focus, which was completed in 1995, ESL Part One, and special Ministry of Ontario training in primary literacy. Amy has approximately 15 years experience in general education classrooms. Early in Amy's education career, she spent two years working as a Special Education resource teacher. Amy is a white female between the ages of 31 - 40. Currently, she is an eighth grade teacher and has a classroom of diverse needs. Two of her students are identified with LDs and have IEPs.

School demographics. Amy works in the GTA in a low- income area school that has a high population of newly immigrated families. According to the Ministry of Education Ontario public school information, the school in which she teaches serves grade JK - 8 with an enrollment of 577 students. The Ministry of Ontario reports that 43% of students at this school come from low-income households and 48% of students do not have parents who have completed some university education. The majority (i.e., 76.4%) of the student population do not have English as a first language. These reported rates are higher than the reflected provincial averages. The school reports that 11.1% of students receive special education services, which closely follow suit with the reported 13.1% of overall Ontario schools (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Education. Amy states that her B.Ed. did little to explore learning disabilities and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Prior to and during the completion of her B.Ed., Amy was not concerned with learning about LDs or inclusive practices for SWLDs. Amy was unaware of the realities of the diverse needs of learners in general education classrooms. Through reflection, Amy sees the importance of education focusing on LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. She has worked alongside approximately twelve student teachers who demonstrated little knowledge and who were ill-prepared in dealing with the diverse needs of the classroom. She describes current inclusion of special education in teacher training as focused primarily on "a psychological perspective as opposed to the perspective of a SWLDs "(Amy, 2011). Currently,

she sees that her student teachers are not able to demonstrate differentiated instruction and diverse learning styles and overall show ill-preparedness with the application of working alongside students with special education needs, including SWLDs. The realities of teaching practice are not conducive to a check-list lesson plan created by student teachers. Amy also indicates that her experience with student teachers demonstrates that the realities of the classroom are not the same as the expectations suggested in pre-service. Therefore, Amy notes the current need for special education methodology for teachers which should focus on LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs.

Learning experiences. Amy's original motivation for taking the part one Special Education course was professional development and to allow access to job opportunities. Amy's first contract position was a Special Education teacher. In hindsight, Amy is appreciative not only for the opportunities that the Special Education Part One course provided, but also for the knowledge she gained through this course. Amy describes Special Education courses as providing:

> .. insight and confidence in meeting student needs, not only for the LD student, but with students who are behind in other areas of curriculum, who need academic and instructional support in order to succeed. (Amy, 2011)

However, when asked about her experience as a special education teacher, Amy reported that she did not enjoy the position. This was due to the fact that she was not able to spend much time with students. Instead, Amy spent most of her time completing paper work. Amy acknowledged that she gained deeper understanding and insight about students from the paper work process. As a special education teacher, she learned more about the IEP process and gained confidence in working with IEPs. Amy attributes her special education position for being well- versed about LDs and the identification process within the school system. This has been helpful since it is applicable in her teaching practice.

Amy describes the role of the general education teacher as one that is responsible for planning, instructing, assessing and monitoring for all students. Amy holds special education teachers as an important resource in assisting teachers in creating IEPs and instructional accommodations for students. However, Amy highlights that a special education teacher may not

always be readily available and that the primary responsibility for all students falls to the general education teacher. Amy indicates that special education teachers "can be overwhelmed and might not be able to come to you and say, ‘What can I get for you?" (Amy, 2011). Amy says that she does have access to her special education teacher on a daily basis informally. Formal meetings are less frequent and happen about once a year if a student is being referred to special education.

Policy. Amy states that she has never searched out the policy on inclusion for SWLDs. However, she does know that it is accessible on the school board website which she states is not maintained regularly. Amy illustrates that obtaining the policy on inclusion for SWLDs is done so through personal teacher initiatives. Amy does not believe that teachers are provided with enough resources in order to meet the policy objectives. Access to resources is limited to persons with expertise and resource staff. Other resources and tools are only received through personal teacher request. Amy states that if teachers are unaware of these resources and tools, they do not how know to ask or who to ask for them. Amy attributes her special education teacher training and primary teacher training as reasons for allowing her to feel confident in knowing how and where to find extra resources that will assist in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. When asked if she feels that it is the teacher’s responsibility to seek out assistance for creating inclusive practices for LD students, Amy feels that in theory the answer is no, but in day-to-day practice teachers are still responsible for students in their own classrooms. If services are not offered, it is still the teacher’s responsibility to seek out resources.

Stressors. Amy also believes that there can be misconceptions around what constitutes differentiated instruction, an inclusive practice, in the classroom. Special education teacher instruction needs to be provided so that the learning needs of students are understood in order for teachers to be able to create inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Amy feels that meeting the needs of students can be overwhelming due to curriculum expectations and new policies and strategies. Government mandated policies and ever-changing curricula make it difficult for teachers to be effective.

> Once you are taught one strategy, another is introduced and you have not mastered the first before you have to start figuring out the second. You are bombarded with all these ideas, want to try them all, and you never figure out which ones work best. (Amy, 2011)

The teacher is also limited with regard to meeting the expectations of the curriculum. Extra time is needed as teachers need to be flexible in order to present lessons with modifications for students who have fallen behind. Amy believes that a disservice is done to students when they have been passed prior to meeting the grade level expectations.

Amy also feels that there can be teacher-resistance to inclusive practices for SWLDs. Amy indicates that there is a current trend demonstrated by most teachers who feel more comfortable in teaching those who are more able to learn the material readily. She also implies stress in worrying about those students who are not accessing the material. In this case, it is easier for someone else to enter the classroom and remove the student than it is to create an inclusive classroom for SWLDs. At times, previous to the experience she has today from teaching in primary levels, Amy did want someone to "pull out [her] problems" (Amy, 2011). Amy notes the difficulty in having classrooms with diverse needs, since this creates a need for properly instructed multi-level classroom teaching. She highlights the challenge of teaching multi-level classrooms effectively. She states that resources are needed to assist teachers with multi-level teaching practices. Amy faces this challenge by practicing guided instruction and teaching lessons for all levels of students.

In creating inclusive classrooms for SWLD, time management and large classroom size are considered stressors. Amy states:

> In a different world, depending on the student need, I think some students cannot be successful in inclusive settings because of classroom size, teacher expertise/ experience. If I had a child with specific learning needs, I think I would enroll them in a specialized school with staff trained and experienced in the strategies and philosophies designed to meet the specific skills of that learning disability. Not a great statement for public education, but I think sometimes, our students are left behind in inclusive settings because we are overwhelmed, ill-trained, or inexperienced. I do the best I can, and yet, I still feel that sometimes, I just don't do enough. (Amy, 2011)

Experience with SWLDs. Amy illustrates that she has become more effective in providing inclusion for SWLDs through practice and experience. More specifically, Amy believes that teaching in primary grades and teaching Special Education provides teachers with the tools to become better in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Amy states:

> I believe that every teacher should have to teach grade one, as well as Special Education in order to understand how to break down tasks into their steps so that instruction can be completely scaffolded and broken down into units that can be taught to all students, regardless of their ability. (Amy, 2011)

This shows that experience is valuable for gaining the skills necessary for creating successful inclusive practices for SWLDs. Through experience, Amy has developed her philosophy of teaching. She aims to teach according to the voice and needs of the individual student rather than being directed only by the curriculum expectations. Amy believes in the importance of student-directed and inquiry-based instructional practices in allowing for differentiation.

Amy suggests that better classroom text resources would be helpful in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. These include textbooks which have companion texts with simple language as well as more pictures and graphics for students. Having texts with the same context but directed for audiences of different levels of learners would also be helpful. Amy believes that this would be beneficial, instead of having to develop resources.

In-services. Amy has not attended any recent in-services on LDs or inclusive practices for SWLDs. Amy notes that most in-services are offered after school. Since this professional development opportunity is offered after school, Amy mentions that the teacher's union does not endorse attendance of after-school workshops. Summer courses are offered through the school board. Amy explains that only the first two teachers who sign up from each school have their registration fees covered, although the cost is not high. Teachers are encouraged to take courses as there is a push for professional development in school initiatives. The in-house training offered provides materials for teachers to read on their own time.

IEPs and accommodations. Amy works in a school with a large population of students who do not identify English as their first language. Because of the large ESL population, some of these students who are learning disabled do not receive proper early identification. The process of getting students identified in order to achieve equity within education is an arduous one. School psychologists will not see students until they speak English at a certain level or have been in Canada for three years. The IEP process can be a challenge for teachers. Teachers who persist in the process of identification are more successful. However, Amy suggests that the ultimate decision to identify and develop an IEP for a student is a decision that can be made by school administration. Amy finds IEPs to be accessible in her school. Her knowledge about IEPs is also

attributed to her experience as a special education teacher. Accommodations are made daily and are necessary for all students and this is not limited to SWLDs.

Leah

In 2000, Leah completed her B.Ed. in the province of Ontario. Prior to becoming a teacher, Leah spent ten years working as a special education assistant in an elementary school in the GTA. Leah has high levels of experience in teaching students with learning disabilities. She has ten years experience as an special education assistant and eleven years experience as a general classroom teacher. Leah is a white female between the ages of 51 - 60. Leah teaches a grade four classroom which currently has three students identified with an LD, one as yet unidentified student who is ESL, and one unidentified student on an informal IEP.

School demographics. Leah works in a high academic performing school in the GTA. Grade three student achievement reports from 2009 - 2010 by the Ontario Ministry of Education report that 80% of the school student's population is achieving the provincial standard (The Ontario of Ministry Education, 2010). This is approximately 20% higher than the provincial average. 93% of the students are achieving the provincial standard in writing, and 97% in math. This again is approximately 20% higher than provincial average.

Upon school visits for meetings with case-study participants, it has been evident that there is a strong sense of community within the school. This is demonstrated through the relationship between staff, students and parents. The school has invited me to several school events, including a staff St. Patrick's Day pot luck luncheon, a student science fair, and a staff royal wedding party. It has been brought to my attention that the school also has an after-school fitness class for staff and after-school movie nights for parents and students.

Journal entry.

> The school is having a science fair today. I visit at noon to meet with a teacher. The school is buzzing with students at lunch time. Students are eating in the hallway and parents are dropping off lunches. I sign myself in at the office, as students are running in and out of the office to share stories with the secretaries. It is obvious that students feel at home. A sense of community is present. I drop in to say hi to the principal. A student casually eats lunch on the floor, and although it is obvious he is in the office because he is in trouble, it seems as though he is at ease. The principal introduces us. Later the

> principal invites me to drop by the student science fair. The kids are excited to share their projects as they explain each one in great detail. As I leave the school, a parent walking by says, “Hmm, I’m going to have to see what this science fair is all about”. It is clear that parents also feel welcome in this school. (Maika, 2011)

Leah works in a school which has students who come from middle to lower- income households. According to Ontario Ministry of Education reports, 26% of students come from low-income households in comparison to the province’s average of 16.5%. 70.6% of students do not have English as their first language, and 7.4% of students are new to Canada from non- English speaking countries. This is significantly higher than the provincial averages. From personal visits to the school, it is evident that the school is located in an area that has higher crime rates. During visits to the school during school hours, I have witnessed several individuals being arrested on the streets near the school. However, I have never felt unsafe within the school setting. Leah works in a school that has 13.5% of students receiving special education (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Leah has assistive technology in her classroom such as smart-boards. While visiting the school, Leah and colleagues discuss informally how to effectively use the smart board. Leah expresses discomfort with technology, mentioning that if more assistive technology is made available, then workshops need to be provided to teach teachers how to use it properly.

Education. During the completion of her B.Ed., Leah did not take any courses specific to special education. In her B.Ed. program, little time was spent learning about LDs. However, Leah indicates that she was interested in learning about special education prior to taking her Bachelor of Education degree. In reference to the importance of special education and inclusive practices in her B.Ed., she stated, “yes, it was important. We need to be prepared for teaching” (Leah, 2011). This backed Leah’s belief that education can lead to stronger feelings of preparedness for teaching. This is further demonstrated in Leah’s belief that Special Education AQ courses and mandated workshops on LD topics for all teachers would improve teaching practices for SWLD. As Leah states:

> Teacher's college really does not prepare you for Special Education students in your class. IF you do not have a placement where the regular teacher is outstanding and models an inclusive program, you are pretty much flying by the seat of your pants.

> Yes, there are AQ courses that are offered, but you must pay for them and attend on your own time. Special Education must be mandatory for teacher certification in order to fully prepare teachers for an inclusive classroom, especially with self-contained classes being phased out. (Leah, 2011)

Leah feels that the school board has a responsibility or an obligation to ensure that the Bachelor of Education courses provided have mandatory special education credits in order to successfully graduate.

Learning experiences. Prior to becoming a general classroom teacher, Leah worked as an EA assistant for ten years. Leah indicates that she took this position because the job was available. This position allowed her to work in the school system and gain valuable experience. Leah highlights experience as a key to successful inclusive practices for SWLD. Leah states:

> Every year of teaching gives me a greater bank of experience. The more experience you gain, the better you learn what you would try again and what you would do differently. (Leah, 2011)

Leah also indicates that social models could contribute in teacher preparedness for inclusive practices for SWLD. Leah suggests that teachers be given the opportunity to visit other classrooms to observe other teachers practices for SWLD. Leah also indicates that manipulatives (i.e. math manipulatives) are a successful resource for teaching SWLD. LD students as well as other students find success when she directs her teaching toward multiple intelligences. Leah believes that educational assistants are a helpful resource in this regard.

IEPs. Leah believes that the identification of LD students can be dependent on the efforts of the classroom teacher. She notes that there is a lot of paperwork involved. She also feels that the process is intimidating to parents who may not be familiar with the system of identification or have little knowledge about learning disabilities. Like many teachers, Leah states that she does not refer to the IEP as often as she would like. Leah feels that once a teacher has created the working IEP, he or she has an idea of what should be done for the student and the grade level which should be taught; however, it is not necessary to look at this document often. Leah states:

> I think teachers are pretty conscious about the successes of the kid and knowing when to move them on. You're not always running to the IEP to make any changes. But you do make the changes when it's time to do that. (Leah, 2011)

Leah makes accommodations daily. In creating a consistently inclusive classroom, she is automatically making accommodations. However, Leah is more aware of making specific accommodations for specific children. For example, for a student with a language-based learning disability who faces a testing situation, Leah ensures clarification of all questions, answers more of her questions, and provides appropriate extended deadlines. Leah creates inclusive classrooms that allow for hands-on learning and integrates subjects, especially the Arts, to make them more meaningful.

Policy. When asked about school/ board policy for SWLD, Leah stated that policy is not easily accessible. Prior to this case study, Leah had never seen the policy on inclusion for SWLD. Not only was the policy difficult to find, but she found it an unfriendly document that did not transfer well in general education classrooms. Leah describes the policy as including key terms, roles and responsibilities of school board and schools in meeting the educational needs for SWLD. In order to actually practice the policy presented, Leah implies that the teacher would require more resources to meet the needs of all students. Leah states that even if the policy was more accessible to teachers, "it's just another policy sitting on a shelf. It has to be mandatory (i.e., resources), it has to be professional development (PD) workshops… like in school, during school time (Leah, 2011)." Teachers do not have the time to search out policies. Leah also feels that policy is not always transferable in the classroom but also might be interpreted differently by different teachers. Therefore, in the end, application of outlined practice may look different in different classes. Instead, Leah highlights the importance of practical hands-on strategies that can be applied easily in the classroom.

Leah believes that mandatory workshops regarding inclusive practices and LDs should be properly organized, funded and provided by specialists. Currently, Leah says workshops are offered infrequently. As well, most in-services are done by downloading documents or having a colleague attend a session and then relay the information to staff. Many workshops that Leah was aware of were offered by other teachers and relied on the teacher's own time and initiative. Leah has not taken any in-services on LD and inclusive practices and does not believe that these workshops are popular with teachers. Leah believes that these workshops would be taken more often if offered by specialists during school hours. Leah has not taken any AQ courses on special education. She believes that these courses are often taken to "bump up the pay scale" (Leah,

2011).

Stressors. Leah feels that student withdrawal can be a stressor for classroom scheduling. Leah has three students who are withdrawn from class to participate in a HSP (home school program), a self-contained language program in the morning from 9 - 10:30 and in the afternoon from 12:45 - 1:45. This program is helpful in allowing the student to receive extra support in smaller group settings. However, it is difficult to integrate the student in her classroom program. Leah believes that students feel that they are no longer a part of the class and are under the impression that they do not have to do the work from the regular classroom. Leah also indicates that although she tries to teach the student the other subjects not covered in HSP while the student is back in her classroom, it is not always possible. Therefore, students who are withdrawn may miss important classroom material and fall further behind in classroom subjects. Leah has the assistance of an EA who comes into her classroom once a week for thirty minutes. She uses this time with the assistant to re-teach the material that the students have missed. Leah has another student who is provided with SERT support for three hours a week, but faces the same difficulties with classroom scheduling.

Strategies for inclusive practices. Leah highlights the need for financial support as an important factor for creating inclusive classrooms for SWLD. The funding that has been allocated for special education needs to be closely monitored, easily accessible and plentiful. In this vein, Leah makes specific reference to the recent elimination of Educational Assistant services, which is an important resource in Special Education. She opines that, even if funding is not currently available, positive media attention in special education is another possibility that could contribute to SWLD success. Leah states:

> The media needs to be aware of our student's needs and maybe publicize the success of these students, not so much the standardized test scores. If we truly believe that no student is left behind, we must put our money and priorities where our mouth is and create the changes that will make ALL of our students successful. (Leah, 2011)

Leah also believes that the school community needs to be educated regarding LDs and the IEP process. Currently, the teacher of the HSP program plans to put together a short workshop to debunk the myths of LD for the parent council.

Leah believes that all students in B.Ed programs should have a mandatory special

education course. Leah suggests that the B.Ed program should have placements for students in special education classes or teachers should have a teaching apprenticeship. Student teachers should learn more about the EA's position. This understanding will help teachers to incorporate them effectively in the classroom.

Janet

Janet completed her Masters in Child Studies and Education and gained her OCT qualifications in 2000 in the province of Ontario. In addition, Janet has taken a Special Education Part One AQ course. Janet has seven years of experience in general education classrooms and three years of experience teaching a primary classroom for LD students only. Janet began her educational career in a special education classroom to ensure a position in education. Janet also has completed workshops through the Geneva Centre on Autism and did training on Board Marker and Smart Ideas. Janet is a white female between the ages of 31- 40. Currently, Janet is a grade three classroom teacher who does not have any students in her classroom that have been officially identified as SWLD. However, Janet does identify that some students struggle with their receptive or expressive language. Janet currently teaches in the lower levels of primary and SWLD are not usually officially identified until the later years. However, Janet does have four students who have IEPs.

School demographics. Janet teaches at the same school as Leah, therefore works within the same student demographic.

Learning experiences. Prior to becoming a teacher, Janet did see the value in education on LD and inclusive practices for SWLD. Janet felt strongly that the role of the teacher was to meet all students' needs and to challenge each student accordingly. Therefore, learning about inclusive practices was necessary to meet the needs of all students. These values were developed through prior work experience as a summer camp counselor in the GTA. Here, Janet was exposed to the diversity of campers' needs and felt it was vital to be inclusive for all campers. Janet also worked in a one-on-one program that helped individual campers to be integrated into the community of camps. These experiences shaped her understanding of LDs and inclusive classrooms prior to the completion of her B.Ed.

Education. During Janet's Master of Child Studies and Education program, time was allocated for learning disabilities and inclusive practices for SWLD. At this time, Janet

completed the elective of Special Education Part One. She completed assignments for the course and spent a teaching block working in a gifted grade four and five split class where she gained valuable hands-on experience working with students of different needs. However, Janet says this course did not fully prepare her for the realities of the classroom. Janet refers to this course as "lip service" as the topics of LDs was only explored in brief. Janet states:

> I think Special Education Part One was really good at telling us all the variety of LD or exceptionalities that are out there, but not at telling us very much on how to help in the classroom. (Janet, 2011)

Strategies for inclusion. Janet demonstrates a positive attitude towards inclusion for SWLD. She believes that SWLD should be included in general education classrooms and that it is important for students to feel included in the classroom community. Janet describes this community as involving diverse learners, who are to be respected for their differences. Within this community, it is important for all students to recognize their strengths and areas of improvement. Janet does imply that students who require consistent one-on-one support can benefit from separate programs with partial integration. This is only beneficial if the program teacher has been properly trained and provides a supportive environment. Janet attributes the HSP (Home School Program) to allow for SWLD smaller class settings allowing for the proper time and attention necessary for successful learning. This time and attention can be difficult for her to provide in a classroom settings with over twenty students. Janet also indicates that teaching students to be self-advocates of their needs is also important for their learning and independence.

Janet indicates the teacher's role is to provide equal education for all students. Janet also believes that it is important for teachers to have support in order to meet the needs of all students, including SWLD. Through the experience of being a teacher in a LD class, Janet felt ill - prepared by her education courses, including Special Education Part One for teaching a class for SWLD. Janet describes her personal experiences as a teacher of an LD class:

> I knew I was in over my head despite my Special Ed Part One. It was very difficult and very disheartening because I felt like I was doing everything I could, but it was never good enough.h (Janet, 2011)

Janet attributes mentors as important resources in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLD. During her years as a teacher in class for LD students only, Janet found supportive professionals helpful in allowing her to improve her teaching practice. She reflects:

> My initial understanding of LD and inclusive practices came from my Special Education Part One. In my initial teaching assignments, I would turn to colleagues for guidance and support, which is something I continue to do today. As an LD teacher, I quickly realized that the Spec Ed course was not enough!!! I turned to the professionals who worked along with the school (e.g., the Educational psychologist, the PDD team, the social worker, the speech pathologist, the occupational therapist etc.) It was a bumpy road at first, but I eventually found what worked for me through trial and error, and I consistently draw upon those experiences to inform my teaching practice in my grade three class. (Janet, 2011)

Janet believes that when it comes to LDs and inclusive practices it can be her peers that she relies on the most for support. Janet finds it helpful to speak to teachers who may have had the students before her turn and discuss new and old strategies that work best for the SWLD.

Stressors. Janet indicates curriculum as a stressor in meeting the needs of SWLD. She notes that it can be difficult to cover the curriculum in its entirety, continue to make sure learning needs are met, and ensure that students are still being challenged. Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing can also contribute to this stress in consuming classroom attention to make sure that students are prepared. As a grade three teacher, SWLD are not pulled out of class for Home School Program (HSP) yet. However, students are pulled out of the classroom for extra support approximately two to three times a week for an hour at a time. Janet also finds that the incorporation of multiple schedules in the class timetable can be stressful. Janet feels that, "when students are pulled out of class for extra support, it can be harder to schedule the whole class for inclusive lessons" (Janet, 2011). Janet highlights that students miss classroom material when leaving the class and that it can be difficult for them to catch-up on missed material.

As a grade three teacher, Janet also finds the curriculum challenging due to the structure of curriculum expectations of her grade. Prior to grade three, the curriculum expectations are not very high and students "coast into grade three." Once a student enters into grade three, the

student faces higher classroom expectations and all students' grades begin to drop. Janet states:

> All of a sudden it's sink or swim. And the kids that were getting the B's are now getting maybe C's or D's and parents are up in arms about that. It's hard. It's hard starting it from the group –up. (Janet, 2011)

Janet finds that parents' support and level of education regarding LD are important for the success of SWLD students. Sometimes Janet finds it difficult for parents to feel comfortable with accommodations and having their child identified with an LD because of lack of education / understanding of LD. Janet states, " Sometimes, it's getting the parents onside because we hear things like, 'they can do this at home' or 'He/ she is just lazy'" (Janet, 2011). Therefore, parents don't always value or allow for student accommodations. (i.e. scribing). Janet describes this process as a wall of resistance from parents. Students can also hold misunderstandings towards LD and SWLD. Janet notes the stress of trying to communicate to students that everyone gets what they need in class, and for some students that means different work or equipment. The differences in work and equipment can lead to teasing and comments about other's abilities or work.

In-services. Janet has not recently attended any workshops or in services on LD and inclusive practices and does not believe that they are offered frequently. Her board's in-services are offered outside of school and on teachers' own time. She highlights that often it really is the newer teachers that are attending the workshops. At Janet's last school, she was sent to a three day workshop on Autism and was provided with supply teacher coverage for the days. Janet valued the strategies learned at the session and still uses them today even for non-autistic students.

IEPs. Janet expresses that the process involved in identifying SWLD is daunting. Parents may resist their child being identified and the internal school process is equally challenging. Paperwork sent home to parents can be intimidating. The process of identifying students involves consulting the school's principal, special education consultant, psychologist, social workers, as well as other resource personnel and this list can be intimidating for parents, who may not be familiar with the school system. She highlights that the actual identification process can be dependent on the school psychologist and the events that occur in SST meetings. Currently,

Janet's school psychologist states that no student can be tested until the age of seven. She refers to this psychologist as also "overrun". She currently also has one parent who is unable to accept that his child has an IEP. However, Janet does find IEPs helpful as a guideline to direct what strategies are working and what material she is expecting to cover with that individual student.

Resource teacher. Janet finds the resource teacher to be a valuable resource in creating inclusive practices for SWLD. Janet's school has a SERT teacher for almost every grade level. These teachers will "pull out" students for extra support. These teachers are very accessible and are seen informally for constant dialogue in creating inclusive settings. Janet does indicate that there is no formal official set times for meetings. During informal meetings, Janet and the SERT teacher go over the material that is being covered in the classroom. The SERT teacher will create her own mini program for LD students with the same overall expectations. The SERT teacher will also create different accommodation or assessment methods. She will provide accommodations for students such as transcribing or making a quiet place available to write tests. Janet also has constant dialogue with the SERT teacher about students' performance.

Strategies for inclusion. Janet feels that more staffing is necessary in order to create inclusive classrooms for SWLD. An EA for every classroom would be beneficial in ensuring that all students' needs are met. From her own personal experiences of working as a kindergarten teacher in the UK with additional teaching support, Janet knows the benefits. As a kindergarten teacher in the UK, classes were big (i.e., approximately 30 students) but each classroom had two teachers. She reflects on her experiences:

> But I was so impressed with how much we could get through. Like two adults, thirty kids. If you do a small group of six each in a half hour, twelve kids are done. Have been worked with, have been seen one-on-one. In an hour, you've got twenty-four kids that have been seen. And you know you can't compete with having a competent capable second adult in the classroom. (Janet, 2011)

Technology that is easily available in the classroom and up-to-date would also help all students. Currently, Janet has a Smart Board which she finds helpful, but recognizes that not everyone has access to this technology. She finds that the school computers and program software for students

are old, slow and outdated. Her school does have a computer room, but teachers are only provided access once weekly. Janet states, "Some of the most vulnerable kids are using dinosaur computers (Janet, 2011)." Janet also finds that they do not have access to many basic forms of technology and teachers do not have computers in their rooms. As well, Janet's school does not have a scanner that works.

Amanda

Amanda completed her Bachelor of Education in Ontario in 1997. Amanda took one special education course in her B.Ed program. Amanda has four years of experience of teaching and teaching SWLDs. Amanda was not born in Canada and is not a native English speaker. Amanda is currently a kindergarten teacher and does not have any students officially identified as LD. However, students are not usually identified until later grades in elementary school.

School demographics. Amanda works at the same school as Demi and shares the same school demographics.

Education. Amanda describes her Bachelor of Education program as emphasizing issues of diversity. Prior to Amanda's Bachelor of Education program, she was aware of and was exposed to the need for education regarding inclusive practices for SWLDs. This awareness was instilled by her volunteer work experience in the classroom where she worked with SWLDs. Amanda took one course offered on special education in her B.Ed. program. The special education course proved helpful in exploring the theory behind LDs. Amanda went on to explain that the special education course prepared her for the presence of LDs in the classroom. However, Amanda states that classroom practice and self-directed research have been the most helpful for learning about LDs and creating inclusive settings. Self-directed research includes reading the ministry documents (e.g., Education for All), research and IEPs. She finds that self-directed research affirms her current practice and gives her extra information about assisting

SWLDs. Amanda attributes her ability to provide inclusive practices to the support of staff and colleagues. She finds that informal dialogue and formal team meetings with her principal and staff are helpful for creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. These arenas allow for brainstorming solutions and accessing support for both the student and the teacher.

Amanda has not taken any additional courses on special education. She states that there needs to be more areas for professional development for teachers in special education. However, she does not have the time or money to take the Special Education part one course. Similar to the additional qualification Religion part one, Amanda feels that Special Education part one should be mandatory for all teachers. She also feels that these programs should be flexible in order to accommodate teachers' busy schedules. Amanda has not attended any workshops on the topic of LDs. However, her school holds monthly meetings in which they discuss topics such as diversity and LDs. As well, teachers at Amanda's school share successes and stressors in working with SWLDs. Amanda recognizes that teacher resources are available but it is up to the teacher to initiate getting these in-services. In-services that are offered outside of school on the topics of LD are not mandatory.

Learning experiences. Having attended elementary school in a different country has shaped Amanda's view of the classroom. She states that her home country's schools do not have the same resources available; therefore she is grateful for all the support offered here in Canada. She says that specialists such as special education consultants are instrumental in assisting her practice for SWLDs. However, she does state that more assistance is needed.

Amanda's personal experiences contribute to her knowledge on LDs. Amanda is also a parent of a child with an LD. Through the perspective of a parent, Amanda has found that inclusive classroom settings have been dependent on the teacher. Here, she highlights that her

son does not always receive modifications or accommodations. Therefore, she has expressed frustration in accessing his needs and she has become a strong advocate of her child. Through this experience, she has a better understanding of the experience that parents with SWLDs have. Amanda expresses the identification process of her son as a "fight" and that it was difficult for some teachers to recognize his LD with his overall high average. Amanda also experiences both negative and positive attitudes towards LDs by teachers.

Parental involvement. Amanda believes that parental involvement plays an important role in the identification of an LD student. Identification does not usually occur until later grades. However, as a kindergarten teacher, Amanda begins a dialogue with parents regarding student class progress. Often parents are unwilling to accept their child as having difficulties in the classroom. Amanda has experienced resistance in student testing based on parent's reaction. She works with the parents to ensure the student's needs are important. Amanda has had positive experiences when working with parents who are aware of their child's learning challenges and helpful with further background information to assist for student support. Amanda attributes parents being on board as being a contributor towards meeting SWLDs' needs.

Policy. When discussing the policy on inclusion, Amanda states that her board has no specific policy on LD inclusion but follows the Ministry mandate. This states that students are to be included in the classroom unless the student needs additional resources and supports. Amanda has also experienced working in a grade four classroom. In this experience, the in-school resources include the withdrawal program with the SERT teacher. Amanda disliked having her students withdrawn from her classroom and believes we need to get away from this practice. Amanda expressed that withdrawal was difficult, since students were not receiving the same classroom information and subjects as other students. Amanda also felt this process made

the student different than the other students in the class. She feels that good self-esteem is a major contributor to successful student learning. She highlights that classroom is an environment that creates feelings of acceptance and feelings of competence which is important for inclusive settings for SWLDs. Having SWLDs not being withdrawn from class also helps other students build on their abilities to be sensitive and empathic to others.

Stressors. Amanda attributes time as being a major stressor in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Time refers to the time available for planning, meeting, and evaluating students. She believes that at times collaborating with special education teachers can be stressful, especially in creating schedules for student withdrawal. More time is needed for communication and planning between general education teachers and special needs staff. Hours of ERW support have decreased, whereas teachers need more time with additional support staff. Large class size has been a barrier to allowing time with individual students. The individual complexity of student's needs has also been considered a stressor for meeting the needs of SWLDs.

Danny

Danny, an Education Consultant and retired school administrator, currently works as a consultant for elementary schools in the GTA. He has the opportunity to assist administrators and teachers, who teach and support SWLDs. Danny has seven years experience as an education consultant and seventeen years as an administrator with forty two total years in education. Danny completed his B.Ed in Ontario in 1970. Danny also speaks from the perspective of a parent of a SWLD. Danny highlights the current shift in Ontario elementary school classrooms towards the emphasis on creating classroom environments that enable students to think critically. This process of higher levels of thinking entails students' ability to infer, identify multiple perspectives, recognize class material content message and consider their thinking in real life

application. In creating this environment, students are given multiple choices to demonstrate their thinking and social learning. This classroom is an organically inclusive classroom for SWLDs. As Danny states:

> These classrooms, at this point in time, provide the best opportunities for inclusion and acceptance of SWLDs. These teachers see students in general and SWLDs in particular not as an annoyance or extra work or even as behavioral problems. They see all students as contributors to teaching and learning. They value and respect the unique contributions of all students and allow for multiple opportunities for students to show their thinking. (Danny, 2011)

Danny notes that teachers are now encouraged to create these classroom environments to support learning. He highlights that in the past, these classrooms have existed, as many effective teachers have figured out how to create these classrooms to ensure successful learning. These teachers focus on the "content as the product and that thinking is the process" (Danny, 2011). Teachers who produce these classroom environments are reflective, constantly evolving and adapting and inventing practice to ensure successful learning. However, Danny does highlight that although this is the direction that education in Ontario elementary schools is heading, not all teachers have been able to create these classrooms, creating a gap between two different types of teaching practices. These teachers create classrooms that focus on the management of students through the school day presenting classroom activities that do not demand deep thinking by students.

Danny believes that in creating these inclusive classrooms, there is no road map. He argues that success in creating inclusive school environments will come from a clear message from school administrators which grants permission to teachers to build learning environments for all students. SWLDs have been and will be successful because teachers are dynamic and respective of the learning needs of SWLDs. In response to the teacher profiles presented in the current study, Danny feels that they displayed a "micro representation of the work and thinking

of many Ontario teachers" (Danny, 2011). He highlights that all participants demonstrated a sense of confidence in their ability to meet the needs of SWLDs within the classroom. He also indicates that: ".. all participants feel that this has been their personal journey of professional learning" (Danny, 2011). He notes that all participants were indicative of having another individual to help in planning or available for brainstorming. As a consultant, he is aware of that there are services offered by the board, but overall these services have not been seen by participants as easily accessible or abundant enough to meet the needs of the classroom teacher.

From a parent's perspective, concerning students with LDs who completed their elementary schooling in Ontario, evidence presented in this research study was complimentary to Danny's own experiences. As a parent, Danny has experienced different levels of inclusion based on teachers' ability to create an inclusive classroom. He states:

> It was always hit or miss from year to year. Everything depended upon the skill and willingness of the classroom teacher to adapt in - order to meet the learning needs of my child. (Danny, 2011)

The teacher's willingness extends to their openness to the parental and student self advocacy. As a parent, Danny provided additional support through tutors. Difficulties with some teachers were encountered in their inability to accommodate programs, tests and assignments. Danny also faced difficulties in teachers' attitudes or misconceptions towards SLWDs. As he states, some teachers had difficulties in accepting his child as a student with an LD based on her ability to succeed in the classroom program that they were offering. This further led to obstacles in achieving proper accommodation.

ATIE Questionnaire

Wilczenski's (1992) Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education (ATIE) questionnaire, was used to gain an understanding of participants' attitudes towards inclusive education. Each

participant was given the 16 question questionnaire at the commencement of each case study. The questions were not limited to the inclusion of LD students only, as the questionnaire included the following four special education categories: physical, academic, behavioral and social aspects of integration (Randoll, N., 2008, p. 32). Each response was represented by a six-point Likert scale, which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The ATIE yielded potential total scores ranging from 16 to 96, with higher scores being more indicative of more positive attitudes. All participants scored higher than 63 on the ATIE, which suggested that each participant held positive attitudes towards inclusion of special education students. Total participant scores ranged from 63 – 83, although the sample size of this questionnaire was limited to the seven case studies. Therefore, a larger sample size may provide different results. Additionally, some teachers indicated difficulties in the limited means of numerical value provided by the ATIE in expressing their attitudes towards inclusion. One participant was unable to complete the questionnaire due to this limitation. Appendix A provides a more detailed depiction of the results yielded by the ATIE questionnaire.

To demonstrate the relationship between ATIE and participant experiences, participants scores were viewed in reflection of participants years of experience, levels of education on the topic of special education and access to resources such as social models and in-services. This analysis is congruent with my previously stated aim to explore if positive attitudes towards inclusion is dependent on indicators of self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1994).

Consequently, although all participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards inclusion, participants with higher years of teaching experience did show higher scores on ATIE, demonstrating higher levels of positive attitudes. However, the lowest score of 63 was not by the

participant of the lowest number of years of teaching experience. The participant with the highest level of education on special education did demonstrate the highest score indicative of holding the most positive attitude towards inclusion. This participant also had a high number of years of experience and high access to in-services and social models. However, the participant holding the second highest score did not have any additional education courses or had attended any in-services on special education. This participant did however have the highest number of years of teaching experience. She also had the highest numbers of years of experience in working in a position specific to special education as an EA. The participant with the lowest score on the ATIE questionnaire did express that they had not attended in-services on LDs, but had attended several other in-services on special education. This participant indicated through interviews that she had positive social models for special education. However, this participant also felt frustration in not having the everyday classroom programs necessary for successful teaching for students with special needs.

Therefore, it currently seems to be the case that the ATIE questionnaire employed in combination with participant journals and semi-structured interviews did not properly indicate if attitudes towards inclusion of SWLDs are influenced by years of experience, education on special education and access to social models and resources. In-class research and larger sample size study is necessary in-order to properly demonstrate how teacher attitudes are manifested on the topic of inclusion and special education. That being said, it is ultimately the case that the interview with the educational consultant and the administration of the ATIE questionnaire were considered supplementary data, in order to ensure that the research issues in the current study

were adequately addressed.

Chapter Four - Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected resulted in a large number of important factors that emerge as important for the proper attention to be given to students with LD in mainstreamed classrooms. These factors will be described in the following pages and will serve as a list of topics that can be used in discussing and preparing the proper educational contexts and materials for teachers and school administrators: Education of teachers, Experience of teachers, In services; Social models: Resource teachers, Consultants and Administration, Other Trends include: Additional teacher support, Parental involvement, Technology, Curriculum, Student withdrawal, IEP/Accommodation, Time, Inclusive practices, Policy.

Education

All but one participant (i.e., Mia) completed her Bachelor of Education in the province of Ontario. Mia completed her degree in the United States. All participants have their Ontario Teacher Certification. Participants graduated between the years 1991 - 2005. During the completion of their B.Eds., six participants expressed that they received 'little', 'brief' or no education on LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. The literature supports this reality, in that it indicates that there are no current mandatory special education requirements for the Ontario teacher certification (Bennet & Wynne, 2006). Out of eight participants, only Margaret Kelly and Amanda report taking an elective course exploring LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Only Mia, who graduated from the US, took one mandatory course that broadly explored learning exceptionalities, focusing on reading intervention. Three participants completed their M.A. in Educational Studies. Mia showed special interest in special education as she completed her M.A in Educational Studies in the US. One participant (i.e., Demi) attributed her B.Sc. in Exceptional Human Learning with providing her with a strong LD knowledge- base and understanding of inclusive practices.

All participants indicated that it should be necessary to learn about LDs and inclusive practices within the B.Ed. program in order to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom. However, six participants also stated that almost all of the courses that they had taken in their pre-service programs did not prepare them adequately for the realities of the classroom. Five out of eight participants (i.e., Demi, Amy, Leah, Janet and Mia) felt that the B.Ed program needed to improve training on LDs and inclusive practices. Six out of seven participants felt that their B.Ed

program did not depict the realities of multi-level learner classrooms. Furthermore, Amy spoke of her own experiences during her B.Ed program, saying that she was not provided with an accurate picture of what to expect in the classroom. She states:

> I don't believe that I had the expectation that I would be teaching four to five grade levels of curriculum within a single classroom. The reality is that is the case in most urban Canadian classrooms. (Amy, 2011)

Six out of eight participants (i.e., Leah, Amy, Janet, Mia, Margaret Kelly and Demi) reflect on how their B.Ed. program did not prepare them for working with SWLDs who have been mainstreamed to general education classrooms. Leah states, "The Faculty of Education (i.e., Teacher College) really does not prepare you for Special Education students in your class" (Leah, 2011). According to the literature reviewed in this study, this reality is commonly experienced among Ontario teachers. PACFOLD research results state that 92% of the overall regions responding to their survey indicate that teachers have little to no awareness of LDs and 'knowledge of their role in accommodating these students' entering into their teaching careers" (Philpott & Chill, 2008, p.9).

One participant (i.e., Amy) comments on how her student teachers are unable to create inclusive practices for SWLDs. She has mentored approximately 12 student teachers and she feels that they are not prepared to meet the different needs of students in the classroom. She notes that student teachers enter into the classroom knowing that they need to differentiate, meet all students' needs and modify programs to meet these needs. Despite this, Amy feels that they are not prepared and able to apply theory into practice. She feels that teacher pre-service does not do an adequate job of showing teachers how to create inclusive classrooms. Therefore, they are unable to meet the needs of all students, including SWLDs.

Four out of eight participants (i.e., Janet, Amy, Mia and Margaret Kelly) have completed the AQ course Special Education Part One. One participant (Janet) describes this course as 'lip service' that explored the various types of LDs but does not provide knowledge on 'how to help LDs in the classroom'. Three of these four participants (Mia, Margaret Kelly and Amy) describe the course as providing helpful tools and strategies for SWLDs that are applicable in the classroom. Mia describes the course as helpful in allowing her connect with other teachers across

Canada for practical classroom strategies for SWLDs. She also describes the course as being helpful in linking theory to practice. All participants felt that more education on LDs including tools and strategies is necessary.

Leah highlights that special education needs to be a mandatory program in order to have "fully prepared teachers for an inclusive classroom, especially with self-contained classes being phased out" (Leah, 2011). Three out of eight participants (i.e., Leah, Amanda and Demi) stated that the Special Education Part One course should be free and mandatory for all teachers. Leah mentions how it is difficult to take these courses, when you have to "pay for them and take them on your own time" (Leah, 2011). They feel that it is impractical to assume that all teachers have the funds to take Special Education Part One. Two participants (i.e., Leah and Janet) indicate a trend in completing AQ courses, like Special Education Part One, by teachers who are motivated to 'bump up the pay scale' or to secure specific positions within education, including administration positions.

Only one out of eight participants (i.e., Margaret Kelly) completed a specialist AQ in Special Education. She felt this specialist certification allowed her to secure a job in a specialized area and gain knowledge regarding LDs, inclusive practices and special education policy and regulations. Two of these four participants who completed their Special Education Part One (i.e., Amy and Janet), used their Special Education Part One courses to secure first time teaching positions in special education positions. One (i.e., Janet) was a teacher in an LD classroom and one (i.e., Amy) became a resource teacher. Despite being qualified for these positions, both teachers found difficulties in these positions. One did not enjoy the responsibilities for all the meetings and paperwork and did not get to spend much time working with students. The other felt overwhelmed and ill-prepared by her education for the position.

Teacher Experiences

All participants attribute experience in contributing to their abilities to create inclusive practices for SWLDs. Participants levels of experience ranged from four to twenty years of teaching SWLD. Four out of eight participants (i.e., Margaret Kelly, Janet, Leah and Amy) have held positions specific to working with SWLDs. These participants believe that this experience not only allowed them to meet the needs of all students; but also allowed them to be more aware of what services were available for all students. One participant (i.e., Margaret Kelly) highlights

that her experience as a LRT allowed her to build a strong knowledge base regarding LDs and inclusive practices. Through her LRT position, she has improved her knowledge concerning LDs and how each child's profile differs. She also is aware of the purpose and use of psychological assessments, and knows what resources are available to assist these learners. Margaret Kelly states that she learns through classroom experience, ongoing practice and observing students. She states, "Only when you get into teaching do you begin to learn about the needs of the unique learner" (Margaret Kelly, 2011). Other participants expressed similar experiences.

Amy states that her experience as a grade one teacher and special education teacher contributed to her ability to create inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Her special education position has allowed her to gain experience in the paperwork process of IEPs and better understand IEPs. As well, her position has allowed her to become well versed in the terms found in the students' psychological reports. This experience continues to provide her with special education strategies which she is still able to apply in her everyday teaching practices. She feels teaching grade one has allowed her to gain experience in scaffolding lessons and using effective guided instruction. She continues to use small group classroom lessons so that she can effectively serve multi-level learners. Amy states:

> Other than the resources provided by support staff, and tools such as manipulatives and anchor charts, not much is provided without asking. Unfortunately, if teachers are unaware that the manipulatives, tools and information are available, they don't know to ask, nor do they know what to ask for. I think I am in a better position to ask and seek out the resources, as a result of my Spec. Ed. training, and as a result of my experiences as a primary teacher, which requires hands-on instruction, scaffolding and breaking down learning activities into basic steps. (Amy, 2011)

All participants attribute experience in general education classrooms teaching SWLDs in assisting their abilities in creating inclusive classrooms. One participant (i.e., Mia) states that working with different students allows her to build on her knowledge base of inclusive practices for SWLDs. The theme of experience continued to be present in all participants' journal and interviews. All participants highlighted that nothing prepared them for SWLDs and the inclusive classroom. They all felt that most knowledge is gained on the job through experience.

That being said, four participants (i.e., Leah, Janet, Mia and Demi) had experience working with SWLDs prior to attending their B.Ed programs. This experience helped shape their

understandings of LDs and inclusive practices. Two participants mentioned that working at programs with students with special needs exposed them to diverse learners and provided them with hands-on experience working with SWLDs. All participants noted that experience was a major factor in promoting successful inclusive classroom teaching for SWLDs. Experience enables participants to build a knowledge base on LDs, IEPs and inclusive practices. It also seems to have allowed participants to become aware of services available for LD students and inclusive practices.

In-Services

Three out of eight participants (Mia, Janet, Margaret Kelly) have attended in-services that were specific to LDs and inclusive practices. However, not all participants have taken these in-services recently. Four participants have never taken an in-service on LDs and inclusive practices. In-services on LDs and inclusive practices are not mandatory and teachers choose which in-services to take based on the needs of their classroom. Two out of six participants (i.e., Leah and Demi) believe that in-services on LDs and inclusive practices should be mandatory. All teachers discussed a need for more resources, tools, strategies and specialists to assist with building stronger inclusive practices; in-services could assist in this process.

Four participants (i.e., Mia, Amanda, Amy and Demi) indicated that in-services regarding LD are available to them, but noted that these services are not mandatory. In contrast, two participants (i.e., Leah, Janet) felt that in-services on the topic of LDs were rarely or possibly never offered. All participants indicated that teachers needed to take the initiative in finding the in-services being offered and were required to take the initiative to attend. Leah and Janet stated that in-services that are offered are after school and are often led by other teachers. They do not believe in-services are popular or well-attended. Both felt that in order for in-services to be successful, they should take place during school hours and be given by specialists. Demi, who has not taken any in-services regarding LDs and inclusive practices, agreed that the availability of workshops during school hours is limited. Janet did attend one in-service in which she received materials to use in the classroom to create inclusive practices. However, this in-service was focused on the topic of Autism. This three-day workshop was taken during classroom hours and Janet was provided with supply teacher coverage so she could attend. She currently uses methods learned at this in-service in her classroom for the benefit of all students.

Mia mentions that there are various other services that the board provides to allow her to feel prepared in creating inclusive practices for SLWDs. She highlights that courses and workshops are offered. Teachers can access a supply in order to be released for that day or they can attend in-services after school. She finds these in-services to be helpful, applicable and useable in the classroom. She mentions that she can access the support of a consultant, who has visited her classroom and provided support in planning lessons for a SWLD. However, she states that this in-service is not always easily accessible as it may take time to receive. She also mentions that some teachers, depending on their position within the school, may have disparate access to workshops and in-services. Mia indicates that it is usually her administration team that makes suggestions for specific in-service topics to improve classroom practices.

Amy suggests that she is encouraged by her union not to take any in-services that are offered after school hours. Two participants (i.e., Amy and Demi) indicated that the in-services and workshops that are taken or well received are in-services that fall in line with board initiatives or are mandatory. Demi states:

> .. I have a (student who is) deaf and hard-of-hearing this year. So, we had to go to two workshops on that. And.. which was after school.. but we didn't have to pay for it. So, if you have an (student with) Autism in your class then they do offer workshops.. Like they want you to go a workshop on it. So I've done the Autistic one and the deaf and hard-of hearing...but not…on LDs. (Demi, 2011)

Six participants expressed the need for greater resource allocation and services provided to properly meet the needs of all students. Leah states that, in order for her to improve her ability to create inclusive practices for SWLDs, there is a need for "more variety of teacher resources paid by the school and mandated in-school workshops to support teachers." In this same vein, Amy opines, "I don't think we are provided with many resources other than the assumed expertise of teachers and resource staff" (Amy, 2011). Ultimately, the opinions of these teachers seem to indicate that those teachers who recognize that support is available believe that it needs to become more accessible to the teacher population.

Overall, each participant indicated a desire for in-services to be administered by specialists, provided during class time, and offered at no cost to the teacher. Participants defined in-services in their current state as helpful, but also unpopular, boring and, in some cases, non-

existent. As stated, some participants have never had in-services, perhaps due to the above factors. Other participants who have participated in in-services, have found them helpful in teaching how to provide accommodations in the classroom for SWLDs As well, in-services seem to have broadened their perceived knowledge base about inclusive practices.

Impact of Resource Personnel

Resource teachers. All participants found special education resource teachers to be a viable resource in creating inclusive practices for SLWDs. All participants met with their resource teachers informally and on a daily basis. Participants felt that this provided a time for brainstorming, lesson planning and creating schedules for SWLDs withdrawal from the classroom. One participant (i.e., Demi) stated that the resource teacher has been able to help her modify tests and assignments specific to each student's IEP. This service is helpful in ensuring that her LD students are provided equal access to the curriculum, and that evaluation is modified for them. Even in light of such positive experiences with resource teachers, all participants indicate a need to ensure the quality of resource teachers in order for inclusive practices to be more effectively practiced. Amy felt that one obstacle to this goal was that resource teachers are sometimes unavailable. Teachers can adapt to this lack of service by meeting with the resource teacher informally; however, the resource teacher may not have the time to seek the classroom teacher in order to ensure formal accommodations are applied on a regular basis. Leah also highlights that HSP teachers are beneficial but need to have expertise and hold positive environment for student learning.

EAs and LD classroom teachers. Other social-model supports mentioned include EAs and LD classroom teachers. Five out of eight participants (Janet, Leah, Demi, Amanda and Margaret Kelly) suggest that EAs in the classroom would be helpful in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Leah highlights that currently they are cutting funding for EAs. However, teachers' inclusive classroom practices benefit with support from EAs. Janet states that having an EA in the classroom would ensure that all her students' needs are met and having an EA allows for more one-on-one time for SWLDs. All participants felt that working with others was beneficial to contributing to their knowledge- base regarding LDs and inclusive practices. Participants state that they are able to "share information and experiences based upon their work with students" (Margaret Kelly). Informal dialogue between teachers allows teachers to identify

what works and what does not work for SWLDs. Leah believes visiting other classrooms and observing other teachers' practices would be helpful in enabling inclusive practices for SWLDs. Demi feels that teacher- mentor programs wherein new teachers have an experienced teacher support them with tools and expertise in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs would be highly beneficial. Mia suggests that time should be provided for teacher partnering in order to create inclusive practices for SWLDs. This collaboration would allow the teacher be better-prepared to meet the needs of LD students. As well, it would relieve some of the stress involved in planning, and resolve the problem of feelings of isolation. Therefore, working with other teachers is highlighted as important for ensuring inclusive practices.

Consultants. One participant (i.e., Mia) highlighted that teachers are able to arrange for special consultants to come into the classroom and help teachers plan for individual SWLDs. Other experts in special education are indicated as important sources of knowledge regarding LDs and inclusive practices such as the school psychologist, social worker, and other related personnel.

Administration. Five out of eight participants (i.e., Lia, Amy, Mia, Amanda and Demi) felt that administrative personnel were helpful mentors in terms of creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. The literature reviewed supports this assertion, as it highlights the relationship between principals and teachers' level of self-efficacy. Specifically, Ryan (2007) presents the idea that teachers with principals who hold strong leadership roles hold staff with higher levels of self-efficacy, developing a collective self-efficacy among teachers and reduces levels of stress. Principals can thus serve as a knowledge source and build and maintain positive staff relationships (Ryan, 2007). This teacher self-efficacy is strengthened by strong attainable goals that allow for professional development (Ryan, 2007).

Additional teacher supports. Six participants (i.e., Demi, Mia, Margaret Kelly, Amanda, Janet and Leah) felt that additional support in the classroom in the form of education assistants, teaching consultants, social workers would allow for more inclusive practices for SWLDs. It would enable students to get necessary individual instruction. As Demi stated in her interview, having another teacher in the classroom would be helpful in assisting with decision-making and would allow teachers to feel less isolated.

Other Trends

Parental involvement. Six out of eight participants (i.e., Mia, Leah, Janet, Demi, Amanda and Margaret Kelly) indicated parental involvement in the process of SWLDs' education as being helpful. However, four participants (i.e., Mia, Leah, Amanda and Janet) noted that communication barriers with parents can lead to misunderstanding about LDs, IEPs and accommodations. Leah and Janet suggested that the identification process can be unfamiliar to parents and the number of specialists requesting formal meetings can be intimidating. Some parents do not want their children to be identified or accommodated, fearing that this might hurt their child's educational career. Parents might also fear accepting their child's LD as it may indicate that there is something wrong with their child. Misunderstandings and lack of education about LDs by parents can also create barriers. Nevertheless, five participants stressed parental involvement as important for SWLDs' identification process and success in the classroom. Mia indicated that she experienced problems working at a school with parents with low literacy rates. She felt that it was even more difficult for SWLDs to complete their homework and stay on track with classroom activities because of the inability of parents to provide assistance. Mia also felt that the identification process of SWLDs can change depending on parental involvement. Mia highlighted the importance of parental advocacy in having their LD child identified. Currently, Mia is working at a school where parents are highly educated about LD issues and who are strong advocates for their children. Students have benefited in receiving identification and have been provided proper accommodations. She states in the interview:

> ...so it depends on what the parents have to say about their child's needs as well. Again, if you are in different places in the board. If you're in the inner city, it might not be, even if you had a parent speak out, I don't know if the resources would be brought...(Mia, 2011)

The contrast in parental involvement for SWLDs between schools supports her strong belief that strong advocacy and knowledge base regarding LDs by parents is important to ensure SWLDs success in receiving inclusive services. Margaret Kelly also found parents to be an important resource for properly identifying students' LD. Parents are able to give information about their

child's learning needs and provide recommendations. Therefore, involved parents are an important factor in SWLDs' success.

Curriculum. Three out of eight participants (i.e., Leah, Amy and Demi) discuss difficulties in finding classroom text resources for their multi-level learners, including SWLDs. They highlight a need for having textbooks that have the same content but are differentiated, more accessible, including different ways for students to access material (e.g., supportive visuals such as graphs in order to ensure that all students are able to access the curriculum. In addition, two participants (Amy, Janet) discuss the stressors of achieving assigned curriculum expectations within specific timelines. This time constraint does not allow them to meet the needs of all students. Amy highlights that the needs of students who fall behind or who are already behind cannot be properly addressed because the next set of curriculum expectations need to be met. Within these expectations, Demi also indicates the pressures of being an expert in everything. This requirement takes away time from focusing on the improvement of many areas of teaching, including special education. However, Mia indicated that improvement in this area is possible in stating that the more she becomes familiar with the curriculum, the more she is able to plan inclusive practices for SWLDs.

Student Withdrawal. One participant (Amy) states that there is a trend among general classroom teachers of preferring to have SWLDs withdrawn from the classroom. In her journal response she states:

> Teachers prefer withdrawal, as it makes their life easier. I think this is out of frustration at having to meet so many needs within their classroom and out of a misunderstanding, or a lack of training in how to differentiate their instruction and learning tasks (Amy, 2011).

Feeling confident with her own teaching strategies, Amy no longer sees the need for students to be withdrawn. She also finds that there is a trend developing where teachers favor "teaching those who can" and conversely "those who can't get left behind". This attitude seems to reflect low self-efficacy with regards to the teacher's own ability to differentiate the curriculum for students with LD.

Despite the fact that inclusive education represents an ideal model for students with LD, three participants (i.e., Leah, Amanda and Janet) indicated that they experienced both positives and negatives associated with student withdrawal. Once students are withdrawn, they are able to get the individualized instruction and other accommodations necessary for success. However, integrating students back into the classroom is difficult. Students are most commonly withdrawn for half days and forty-five minute blocks for language and math. Therefore, teachers have to teach the general education class language and math at the same time. As a result, SWLD misses out on important classroom learning opportunities. However, flexible timetabling is not always possible and students do fall behind. Helping SWLDs catch up on work missed when they are withdrawn can be difficult. At times, SWLD appear to feel isolated from the rest of the class and this feeling can affect student performance in class which, as one participant (i.e., Amanda) opined, can even have negative effects on student self-esteem outside of the classroom. On the other hand, one participant (Demi) did not have access to half-day withdrawal programs for SWLDs and found this situation stressful. As an intermediate teacher, she expressed that her students with LD are her full responsibility as they no longer have access to half-day withdrawal. Thus, in her experience, the removal of withdrawal services for students in her class was a source of stress.

Technology. Three out of eight participants (i.e., Janet, Mia and Margaret Kelly) indicated a need for assistive technology for SWLDs to allow for inclusive practices and equality in education. Mia highlighted technology as necessary in allowing her students with LD the tools necessary for classroom success. She stated that she currently has had a grade three student who received a laptop as an educational support, which she feels is an extremely helpful and necessary adaptation. She states that only students who meet the criteria for receiving this kind of assistive device are able to access the technology in the classroom. However, she believes that laptops would benefit all students. Tools such as smart boards also help in creating inclusive

practices for SWLDs.

Two participants (i.e., Janet and Leah) reported that they do not have access to current technology. They do have access to computers once weekly, but the computers are slow and ineffective. Students in their HSP program do have access to computers. More information is required to determine the status of these services. Leah mentions that she is not comfortable with new technology, and would require training regarding these services.

IEPs / Accommodations. In a similar vein, all participants were asked about the IEPs, IEP process and accommodations. All participants attributed experience as the significant factor in assisting them in understanding IEPs. One participant (i.e., Mia) expressed having difficulty with the psychological jargon (e.g., terminology and acronyms) used in IEPs. However, she stated that the strengths and accommodations were easily accessible and understandable. All participants said that they were able to refer to their students' IEPs easily and as often as needed. All participants found IEPs helpful in ensuring that the expectations of students are met and in clarifying the required accommodations and modifications. Three participants (i.e., Amy, Margaret Kelly and Demi) also highlighted the significance of the IEP as a legal document. Mia indicated that the IEP provides important documentation for students to ensure that their learning needs are met.

Four out of eight participants (i.e., Leah, Amanda, Janet and Demi) highlighted IEPs as a part of the paperwork process of student identification. Leah highlighted that some students are identified due to teachers' efforts in thoroughly attending to this paperwork process. Four participants (i.e., Mia, Amanda, Amy and Leah) highlighted that the identification process of students can be a long process and that it can be years until the student is officially identified. Two participants (i.e., Leah and Janet) indicated that there is only one educational psychologist for many schools, making it difficult to have SWLDs identified in a timely fashion. Participants mention that this process can be dependent upon the efforts of the administration, the educational psychologist and the parents, as well as other factors such as the child's age and first language. Therefore, this process can be dependent on several factors contributing to the identification of SWLDs.

In terms of usage of these documents, two participants (i.e., Leah and Demi) stated that

they do not refer to their IEPs often and feel that other teachers neglect them as well. They both feel that it is not always necessary to refer to IEPs. The reviewed literature supports the idea that it is common practice for teachers to neglect student IEPs. Unfortunately, this tendency has led to a lack of implementations of proper accommodations for SWLDs, and consequently a lack of academic success for these students. However, all participants indicated that they were involved in creating IEPs. This experience in itself was found to be helpful in understanding IEPs and understanding the specific learning needs of their LD students. In addition, all participants noted that they do provide daily accommodations and modifications for SWLDs. However, one participant (i.e., Janet) did indicate that this accommodation was a stressor in that making sure the needs of all students are met can be challenging. Literature also tells indicates that teachers use accommodations broadly and not specific to students' needs. Even though the results of this study suggested that all participants were making accommodations for SWLDs, classroom observation would be necessary to identify how participants were implementing accommodations.

Time. Five of eight participants (i.e., Margaret Kelly, Amanda, Amy, Demi and Janet) indicated that lack of time was a stressor in creating inclusive practices for SLWDs. More time seems to be needed for teachers and students in order to ensure proper accommodations and modifications are being met. Demi and Janet also highlighted the stressor of not having enough time to ensure that all students' needs are being met and that there is little time for individual attention. Demi also suggests that there is not enough time to explore all the topics necessary to be a successful teacher. Three out of eight participants (i.e., Demi, Janet and Leah) noted that time is also necessary in order to attend in-services and supplementary courses. One participant (i.e., Amy) highlighted that teachers can feel overwhelmed when trying to live up to the expectations that are placed on them, such as constantly learning new policies and strategies. Amanda referred to time as a resource needed for teacher planning, meetings, and evaluation of students.

Leah and Janet identified classroom timetables as a barrier to creating inclusive settings for SWLDs. Students are withdrawn from classrooms for half-days or for forty-five minutes periods for one-on-one support for math and languages. In order to ensure that students do not fall behind in other subjects, participants need to schedule their math and language lessons at the

same time as student withdrawal. This scheduling accommodation is not always possible; as a result, participants are constantly trying to catch up SWLDs on all subjects. It is thusly difficult to meet the needs of all classroom students.

Inclusive Practices. All participants state that using inclusive practices for SWLDs benefit their teaching practices as well as all students in their classroom. One participant (i.e., Demi) argued that SWLDs with severe needs should not be integrated into the general education classroom. These students would instead benefit from services specific to the child that cannot be offered in general education classrooms. Four out of eight participants (i.e., Janet, Amy, Demi and Margaret Kelly, Mia) indicated that LD students with severe difficulties should be in special education classrooms that will meet their needs.

School Policy. Four participants (i.e., Leah, Amy, Janet and Margaret Kelly) found the policy on inclusion not easily accessible. Two participants (i.e., Leah and Amy) had never seen the policy prior to this research study. One participant (i.e., Margaret Kelly) indicates that she would have to search to locate the formal policy. Two participants (i.e., Demi and Mia) found the policy easily accessible. One participant (i.e., Mia) indicated that the policy was easily accessible and that the board provides proper resources to demonstrate how to apply the policy in the classroom.

Two participants (Leah and Janet) highlighted the impracticalities of the policy. They stated that no one has time to read policy, and that they would prefer in-class workshops by specialists who provide tools to create inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. One participant (i.e., Janet) felt that the interpretation of policy in different classrooms can result in different practices and different levels of inclusive practices for SWLDs. Ultimately**,** the fact the majority of participants were unaware of the policy details seemed evident. That being said, participants were nevertheless aware that all students have the right to equity in education according the Education Act that and that IEPs are a legal contract.

Chapter Five – Conclusions in Line with Guiding Questions

Having identified the major factors associated with the requirements of improving practice with LD mainstreamed classrooms, we return to the originating questions of this study and bring some elements of response and understanding to these originating questions. Each area addressed by the guiding question will be discussed in light of the data provided by the participants in this study.

Relationship between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Inclusion Practices for Students with LD

In emphasizing the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher practices in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs in GTA elementary schools, I examined how certain salient factors contribute to self-efficacy of successful teachers in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms. During this process, I referred to teachers' level of education with regard to LDs and inclusive practices as related to their levels of self-efficacy in this area. Teachers' experiences with SWLDs have been equated with mastery experiences, as defined by Bandura (1994). The social models (e.g., mentors with higher levels of knowledge or/and experience with SWLDs) accessed by participants have also been considered to contribute to teachers' perceived ability to serve students with SWLDs in an appropriate way. Furthermore, social persuasion (i.e., the positive support system provided for participants in creating positive attitudes towards SWLDs) has been suggested to have an influence on a teacher's self-efficacy in this area. Ultimately all of these factors seem to work together in determining a teacher's level of self-efficacy in providing appropriate instruction to SWLDs in general education elementary schools.

Authors such as Ryan (2007) support the argument that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy demonstrate greater abilities to provide inclusive classrooms for SWLDs with higher student achievement and motivation. Teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy often do not provide adequate inclusive practices for SWLDs and are more likely to resist an inclusive model (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991). Furthermore, teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be hostile and negative to SWLDs (Schaefer, 2010). Therefore, there is a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their willingness to provide inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Five out of eight participants indicated feelings of being overwhelmed in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Levels of self-efficacy increased through education, experience,

and social mentoring. However, as indicated by participants, teacher initiative is ultimately necessary to ensure inclusive classrooms for SWLDs.

The stated factors of self-efficacy are not necessarily the only means in understanding general education teachers' practice in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. In examining the levels of self-efficacy in my participants, I also considered additional other factors which could contribute to strong inclusive practices for SWLDs in the classrooms. Bandura's (1997) notion of perceived self-efficacy is also a very important factor in one's ability to implement inclusive practices for SWLDs. Perceived self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1997) "what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances" (p.37). Perceived self-efficacy offers a potential explanation as to how teachers who have the skills and strong knowledge base to create inclusive practices find themselves unable to put these skills in practice (Bandura, 1997). A disconnect between abilities and practice perhaps also accounts for the fact that individuals with equal skill sets can have differences in performance (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) describes the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and self-efficacy. "Can" is perceived self-efficacy or capability, whereas "Will" is self-efficacy with intention. These reflect two separate entities. Therefore, any consideration of the self-efficacy of general education teachers' in implementing inclusive practices must also take into consideration teachers' perceived self-efficacy, as determined by their present circumstances. That being said, there are other factors which may contribute to a teacher's overall ability to foster academic success for SWLDs.

Factors Shaping Levels of Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Education for LD Students

All participants indicated that education on LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs would increase their ability to provide inclusive classrooms for LD students. However, two out of four participants with AQ Special education courses indicated that once placed in the classrooms, their educational background did not provide confidence in working with SWLDs. All participants indicated that their pre-service teacher education courses did not provide them with the tools or knowledge needed to provide inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. In addition, all participants indicated relatively low levels of self-efficacy entering into their teaching profession

in creating inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. These lower levels of self-efficacy were expressed in such terms as “overwhelmed” and “not prepared.”

Participants discussed several factors as important contributors that provide the tools and knowledge to create inclusive practices for SWLDs resulting in higher levels of self-efficacy. Participants indicated that experience in working with different SWLDs enabled a better understanding of SWLDs and the ability to provide inclusive practices. Four participants indicated that work experience in positions specialized to working with SWLDs (e.g., resource teacher, E.A. and LD education teacher) were helpful in gaining increased access to knowledge, resources and experience. One participant stated that her experience working with grade one students helped her understand the learning and teaching process better. In particular, it taught her how to scaffold activities, a strategy necessary for inclusive education in a multi-level classroom.

All participants indicated that having mentors who share their knowledge base regarding LDs and inclusive practice is significant in ensuring strong inclusive classrooms for SWLDs. Participants discussed the ‘sharing’ process as an important learning tool to create inclusive classrooms. The interaction between resource teachers and general education teachers daily was indicated by all participants. The relationship between the resource teacher and general education teacher is significant. As supported by the literature review, the relationship between resource teacher and general education teacher can make a positive contribution to the success of the LD student.

Three participants discussed the importance of access to assistive technology for creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Subsequently, teachers also indicated the stressors relating to the

lack of technology assistance in the classrooms and difficulties faced in the paperwork process to receive these services. One participant discussed the need for teacher training in these technology services. Participants also highlighted the importance of teachers to be aware of how they work, the benefits and how to properly apply them in class in order to feel confident to do so. The lack of knowledge on assistive technology seemed to result in lower self-efficacy. Congruently, all participants indicated knowledge of resources available is necessary to create inclusive practices in classrooms for SWLDs. Participants highlighted a need for more classroom textbooks for multi-level learners to allow teachers to better teach a class with multi-level learners. Participants felt that easily accessible resources are not available. This inaccessibility of appropriate resources has been suggested as cultivating a disconnect between policy expectations and teacher practice.

Teachers Shaping of Personal Understanding of LDs

All participants indicated that the primary factor in shaping their understanding of LDs was the experience of working with SWLDs. Participants' experience ranged from four to twenty years of teaching with SWLDs, and four participants had held job positions that were specific to LDs, (i.e. special education resource teacher, EA and teacher in a LD classroom). They felt this experience to be important in establishing their understanding of LDs. Furthermore, this experience allowed participants to gain a stronger knowledge base regarding resources available for creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. This position enabled participants to be well-versed in the language used when discussing SWLDs and well-educated about the formal process entailed in identifying SWLDs.

Bandura (1994) also supports mastery experiences as a major contributor to self-efficacy.

In other words, a teacher should feel successes in this area in order to increase their self-efficacy in working with students who have LDs. However, these successes should not come too easily (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, it is not just the number of years of experience that are indicative of self-efficacy, but also the degree of challenge and success when addressing 'mastering of experiences' for general education teachers when working with SWLDs. Unfortunately, it is difficult to state whether an individual with more years experience has completed more mastery experiences in this area, as individual perceptions about their successes and challenges may differ make these terms difficult to define objectively.

Although all participants stated that experience contributed to building their understandings of LDs, a participant with five years' experience indicated high levels of self-efficacy, using similar terms to those used by a participant of twenty years of experience. The participant with five years' experience shared personal stories of successes and challenges of creating inclusive practices for SWLDs that were meaningful in her years of general education teaching. She stated great passion for inclusive practices and had also indicated high levels of Special Education qualifications. These multiple factors contributed to self-efficacy. Therefore, although the number of years of experience may differ, this participant also had the opportunity to achieve mastery experiences and had high levels of self-efficacy with creating inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms. Again, this highlights the fact that the level of mastery experiences held by a teacher can be dependent upon various factors and is not necessarily dependent merely on years of teaching experience.

In relation to this reality, four participants stated that experience prior to their Bachelor of Education program created their understandings of LDs and inclusive practices. These

experiences included working with SWLDs in non-general education classroom settings and having personal relationships with individuals with LDs. One participant's main understanding of LDs was formed by personal experiences with her son who has an LD. These experiences do have value in establishing one's knowledge base on LDs and inclusive practices despite occurring outside a general education classroom. However, the dynamics of a general education classroom may change the degree of success and may indicate stronger challenges for creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Further research is required to support the transfer of prior to completion of B.Ed. experience with SWLDs in non-classroom settings to their teaching practice as professionals.

Participants' understandings of LDs and inclusive practices were also shaped by their social models and by self- regulation of motivation (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) indicates that social models provide an additional avenue in increasing self-efficacy in that these experts make learning and mastery seem more possible. Participants also indicated that explicit mentoring within the teaching profession by those with a strong knowledge-base on the topic of inclusive practices for SWLDs allowed for a deeper understanding of LDs. Special Education resource teachers were viewed by participants as major contributors to creating inclusive practices for SWLDs in their general education classrooms. All participants discussed meeting with their resource teacher both informally and formally daily, and also met with other teachers and their leadership team (i.e., principals and vice principals) to build on their knowledge base regarding LDs and inclusive practices. Several even indicated the need for additional teacher sharing of knowledge of LDs and inclusive practices. Thus, it appears that strengthening the importance of social support and mentoring for teachers would cultivate higher levels of self-

efficacy in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. However, further research is required to explore the impact of expertise and attitudes of those who are major contributors to general education teachers' understanding of LDs in the classroom.

Nevertheless, the reviewed literature supports the assertion that the relationship between the special education teacher and general education teacher is important in fostering inclusive practices for SWLDs in general education classrooms, although authors such Young Buckley (2004) argue that this relationship is often compromised based on each respective teacher's perception of the other and their role in the SWLD's education, as well as their belief in their expertise. Therefore, it seems that although a strong relationship between special and general education teachers is a benefit to the LD student's success, this relationship must necessarily be based on trust and the expertise of each teacher should be acknowledged appropriately.

This process is perhaps made more difficult by the fact that both the participants and the literature review asserted that teachers do not gain sufficient access to education on LDs during their Bachelor of Education programs. Four out of seven participants indicated that they received insufficient education on LD and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Six out of eight participants reported that the pre-service program does not prepare teachers for the reality of multiple learner needs in the classroom. All participants stated that they believe that education on SWLDs for teachers should be mandatory as it is a common reality to educate SWLDs in general education classes. Participants also indicated the need for an educational reform in the area of in-service and education courses regarding LDs and inclusive practices for SWLDs. Three participants referred to existing courses as providing "lip-service" or "being boring", which deterred participants from attending in-services. Nevertheless, four participants who have received

education in this area indicated that additional education on LDs was helpful and a main contributor to building a foundation of knowledge for LDs and inclusive practices.

Strategies for Improving Levels of Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusion of Students with LD

Several factors can be considered in this process. These are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Education. An increase in teacher education regarding LDs during pre-service and in-services for professional development can contribute to teachers understanding of LDs and inclusive education. All teachers indicated a need for more adequate education regarding LDs and inclusive practices. Those participants who indicated having Special Education AQ courses stated that they were expensive courses taken on their own time. Three participants indicate that these courses should be free and mandatory. Those who have not taken AQ courses express desire to do so, but find them not easily accessible due to time and cost. The design of Special Education AQ should reflect the busy life of teachers providing flexible scheduling. This issue of accessibility seems supported by the reviewed literature in that, as of 2006, only eight percent of teachers entering into the profession had knowledge on LDs (Philpott & Chail, 2008, p. 9). Teachers are expected to work towards providing inclusive practices and adhere to the legal documents of the I.E.P. and Education Act without the required knowledge base. This issue creates a systemic problem that prevents teachers from properly adhering to these policies. The reality expressed by the participants of this study supports the working table's suggestion to the Ministry of Education that teachers take a mandatory half-credit course specific to Special Education as a requirement for teachers' certification in Ontario.

An additional issue in this area is that Special Education courses provided in pre-service teacher education are referred to as being too broad. As Amy states, she has had several teacher candidates from B.Ed. programs in her classroom and they are unaware on how to create inclusive practices for SWLDs. A redesign of these courses may prove helpful for teachers and the application of inclusive practices for SWLDs. Incorporating elements of theory and practice with emphasis on specific strategies and tools needed in the classroom for inclusion is needed.

Resources. Participants with strong levels of self-efficacy indicated that knowing the resources available is a significant contributor in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Therefore, teachers need to have easy access to these resources, and these resources should be available readily to them. Teachers also need to be aware of the application and the benefits of these resources in order to create successful inclusive practices for SWLDs.

Technology. Technology in particular is a resource which has positively impacted SWLD's access to education. However, it is recommended that teachers be informed of the benefits and proper application of these services in the classroom to benefit SWLDs before technological resources are provided. Participants in the current study indicated that technology was an important tool to provide equity in services for SWLDs, but that a service needs to be instituted to ensure that teachers are able to understand the benefits of employing assistive technologies in the classroom. One participant indicated the difficulties faced when general education teachers are expected to be technologically proficient or aware of the resources without proper direction. Another participant indicated that an in-service on Smart boards was very beneficial in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Thus it seems, at least in the current sample, that there is both a need for proper training in assistive technology for teachers to provide inclusive practices for

SLWDs and a desire for teachers to receive it.

Social mentors. Another valuable resource in this area is the presence of social mentors who have expertise in the field of inclusion for students with LDs. However, it is currently recommended that these potential mentors, such as candidates for positions in special education, be required to spend a minimum number of mandatory years of experience with SWLDs and creating inclusive practices. Currently, a prospective special education teacher must only have specialized in special education during his or her Bachelor of Education. However, special education teachers also receive ongoing access to in-services about various topics regarding special education and inclusive practices for SWLDs. This trend is encouraging as all participants stated the importance of these teachers to ensure inclusive classrooms and practices for SWLDs, as well as the need for more school personnel who specialize in the area of inclusion for students with LDs.

Systemic Changes

Teachers indicated large classroom sizes as a stressor in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs. Smaller classroom sizes may support more individualized teacher-student interaction to ensure that the needs of all students are met. A shift in thinking in teacher instruction and evaluation is required to cultivate higher self-efficacy which would allow for increased rates of inclusive practices in general education classrooms. One participant described the challenge of simultaneously being expected to meet the needs of the curriculum, policy and the needs of each individual student. However, it is suggested that a sound understanding of practices and policies for SWLDs is beneficial in alleviating these challenges. Participants indicate that an interpretation or application of a policy or strategy may look vastly different in different

classrooms. A consultant in special education is required to ensure best teacher practice in policy and strategies to create inclusive classrooms for all.

Appendix A
Teacher Profiles Chart

Name	Age range	Grade taught	Degrees / Education	Length of experience	Attitude Towards Inclusive Education (ATIE) Scale Score
Mia	31-40	3rd grade in a rural GTA school	-B.Ed. and MA from USA university MA focus was in special education Other AQ courses: -Reading Specialist -Special Education P1 -Differentiated instruction	5 years	Incomplete
Margaret Kelly	41-50	School LRT at same GTA school as Mia	-B.Ed. 1991 with one special education course. -Self-educated through reading and practice in the field of LD. -In - services on special education topics -Other AQ courses: Specialist in Special Education (Education P1, Instruction in the needs of the Behaviour and Gifted)	20 years	83
Demi	31-40	8th grade in a suburban school in the GTA	B.Sc. in Exceptionality in Human Learning from an Ontario institution in 1997 Other courses: - Religion Specialist -Guidance P1 -Drama Intermediate training	15 years	63

Amy	31-40	8th grade in a low income high immigrant area school	B.Ed and M.A. in Education from an Ontario institution in 1995 Other courses: -Special Education P1 - ESL P1 - Ministry Training in Primary Literacy	11 – 15 years	75
Leah	51-60	4th grade in a high academic achievement and high ESL school in the GTA	B.Ed. from an Ontario Institution	--Prior to being a teacher she worked for 10 years as special education assistant --11 years as a general teacher after graduation	76
Janet	31-40	3rd grade in same school as Leah	MA Child Studies from OIT in 2000. Other courses: - Special Education P1 -Geneva centre training on Autism -Assistive technology in – service training on Board Markers and Smart Ideas	7 years as a general teacher 3 years as special education	68
Amanda	31 - 40	Junior Kindergarten	B.Ed from on Ontario Institution -One special education course offered in B.Ed. -MA of Education	4 years	83
Danny	63	Education Consultant	B. Arts and M.A. in education - Specialist in Reading - Principals qualifications - Religious education	42 years	81

+Notes: All six out of eight participants were white females. One participant was male. One participant identified as non - white.

Appendix B
Journal Questions

Getting to Know You:

What year did you graduate with your Bachelor of Education degree?
Did you complete your B.Ed in Ontario? Yes / No
If No, Which provenience or state did you complete your B.Ed?
Did you take any Special Education courses with your B.Ed ? Yes / No
Roughly what percentage of time did you spend exploring learning disabilities and inclusive practices for LD students in your B.Ed?
Did you feel it was important to learn about inclusive practices for LD students during your B.Ed? Yes / No. Why/Why not?
Have taken any Special Education AQ courses? Yes / No. Why/ Why not?
Prior to becoming a teacher, did you anticipate the need for training for inclusive practices for LD students? Yes / No. Why/ Why not?
Currently, how many students within your classroom have learning disabilities?
Roughly, how many years of teaching experience do you have with LD students?
Please describe your role in teaching for LD students.
Over your years of experience with LD students and inclusive practices has your ability and knowledge for inclusive practices increased? Please elaborate.

Journal Questions
Phase One:

Please describe how you gain your understanding of LDs and inclusive practices for LD students?
What is your school and school board's policy on inclusive practices?
Is your school policy on inclusive practices easily accessible?
How does this policy incorporate the needs of LD students? Is this policy easily applicable with the resources given? Why/Why not?
What are the resources provided by your work for creating inclusive practices for LD students? Are these helpful? How so? What could be provided to ensure inclusive practices for LD students?

Phase Two:

What are the main stressors of having LD students in your classroom?
What are the barriers to creating inclusive practices?
Describe your successes with inclusive practices.
What do successful inclusive practices for LD students look like for you?
What resources would increase your confidence in creating an inclusive classroom for LD students?
Do you have any mentors who can provide social models for inclusive practices? How does this

assist your classroom?
Do your students become more successful with additional experience in inclusive practices for LD Students?

Appendix C
General Interview Questions

When is the last time you met with a special education teacher? Please describe the experience.
How many times in a day do you refer to students' IEP? (a week, month, year)
How confident are you in reading / understanding student's IEP and implementing the given recommendations?
Explain the IEP process.
Are you able to make accommodations daily? Why / Why not?
How would you describe your knowledge on LD and inclusive practices? (low / med. / high)
Please describe your understanding of equity.
Please describe your definition of inclusion.
Please define learning disabilities. What are the different types of learning disabilities. How does this affect student learning?
Please describe your last in-service experience.
Approx. when was this? What did you learn from this in-service?
How have you applied what you learned in your classroom?
How often do you get in - service / out - service for LD and inclusive practices?
The school board policy mentions that the classroom teacher will provide all students with the means they need to be successful. Does the school board provide the means or tools for successful application?
What resources would be required for teachers to meet the needs of the policy on inclusion for students with LDs?
How did your Special Education Part One course prepare you in creating inclusive practices for SWLDs?
Please describe how the courses you took during your B.Ed explored LDs and inclusive practices?
Please describe the courses offered on special education in your B.Ed.

Questions corresponding to Journals

You mentioned that you previously worked at a different school. Was this school in a separate school board?
Did you experience different levels of access to support for creating inclusive practices for SWLD? Please describe the differences in support or factors that contributed towards your ability to create inclusive practices for SWLDs.

In your phase one journal questions you mentioned a little bit about your school / school board policy. You were interested in talking more about the policy on inclusion for SWLD. What are your feelings on this topic?

As stated in your journal the school board provides in-services for staff to teach strategies for working with LD students. Have you been able to attend one of these in - services?
Are the easily accessible?

Do they provide useful / applicable strategies for everyday teaching? Do you know if other teachers on your staff attend these in-services?

In your journal responses you mentioned that technology is helpful in creating inclusive practices for SWLD, how so? Currently, what is your access to technological services? Have you received in - service or out - services on assistive technologies?

Please describe the barriers to creating inclusive practices.

You mentioned you took a course addressing several exceptionalities in your B.Ed. What percentage of this course focused on LDs and inclusive practices? Did you feel prepared to create inclusive practices for SWLD after the course? If yes, How so?

Your initial understanding of LDs was developed while working at a Learning Resource Room, please describe this experience.

During your volunteer experience, did anyone describe LDs to you? or inclusive practices for SWLD?

Please describe how you teaching philosophies on LDs and inclusive practices have developed through classroom or personal experiences over your years of teaching.

What kind of manipulative are you able to use to create an inclusive classroom? Is it common for teachers to use manipulatives?

In your journal, you have mentioned that the policy on LD inclusion is “unfriendly” and had not been brought to your attention. Do you think that if a policy was more friendly and was more present in the school environment, would inclusion in the classroom for LD students look differently?

Is the policy too idealistic, in comparison to the realities of the classroom? What might make the policy more realistic?

What drove you to complete your special education part one course?

What support is helpful in allowing you to meet the needs of your students?

Do you ever feel that the support is not present?

What has been helpful in preparing you for working with students with LDs?

In your journals you mentioned that you experienced feelings of disheartenment when working with students with LDs despite your educational background with special education part one.

Please describe this experience further.

Is assistive technology easily accessible for students with LDs?

Do you think that a program for teacher that allows for teacher partnering on the topic of LDs would be helpful?

Do you find that inclusive practices for LD students are high on the agenda for your school environment?

You mentioned teachers' prefer withdrawal, could you please expand on this.

I noticed you said that not all teachers understand how to apply differentiated instruction. Can you please expand.

I really appreciate your honesty. You have mentioned the Gap between policy and teacher expectations to fulfill those policies. Do you think there are resources that can be provided to teachers to allow for teachers to be better able to reach those policy goals?

Do you feel that seeking resources / education on special education and inclusive practices has fallen on the responsibility of the teachers?
Do you feel that teachers know are aware of the need of seeking out assistance for creating inclusive practices for LD students?

Please describe further the difficulties you find that your student teachers are having with creating inclusive practices for LD students.

How was your experience as a special education teacher?
Did you feel prepared initially in being a special education teacher?
How did it assist you in your teaching practices today?

Appendix D
ATIE Questionnaire

Wilczenski's (1993) "Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education" Scale

Instructions:

Please circle the number that best indicates your reaction to every item according to how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Please provide an answer for every item.

Strongly Agree **6**
Agree **5**
Agree Somewhat **4**
Disagree Somewhat **3**
Disagree **2**
Strongly Disagree **1**

1.Students whose academic achievement is 2 or more years below the other students in the grade should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
2. Students who are physically aggressive toward their peers should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Students who cannot move without help from others should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
4. Students who are shy and withdrawn should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
5. Students whose academic achievement is 1 year below the other students in the grade should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Students whose speech is difficult to understand should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Student who cannot read standard print and need to use Braille should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. Student who are verbally aggressive toward their peers should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Students who need training in self - help skills and activities of daily living should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
11. Students who use sign language or communication boards should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
12. Students who cannot control their behavior and disrupt activities should be in regular classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6
13. Students who need an individualized functional academic program in everyday reading and math skills should be in regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Students who cannot hear conversational speech should be in regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. Students who do not follow school rules for conduct should be in regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Students who are frequently absent from school should be in regular classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

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