The Elusiveness of Inclusiveness: A Discursive Analysis of Inclusion in a District Level Exceptional Student Education Leadership Team

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The Elusiveness of Inclusiveness: A Discursive Analysis of
Inclusion in a District Level Exceptional Student Education Leadership Team

by

Karen Ramlackhan

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, Higher Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Keywords: Disability, Inclusion, Poststructuralism, Discourse, Special Education

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who have been with me every step of this journey: to my partner Arvind who is unflinchingly supportive and eternally dedicated to me, and to our daughter Sevita who is the incredible light that keeps me going. You are my bedrock!

To my parents, Raghu and Verna who have instilled in me values of integrity, commitment, diligence, and compassion. You raise me up to more than I can be.

To my grandmother, Samdai, who taught me the meaning of strength and perseverance through her life experiences. You taught me to never give up.

And to family and friends who have provided encouragement along the way.

I love you all!
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I am also grateful to the professors and classmates who have helped shaped my thinking and understanding about critical issues in education.

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Abstract

This poststructural study utilizes Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power to explore the discursive formation of inclusion of a district level Exceptional Student Education leadership team in order to understand how the discourses are constructed, practices are normalized, and power relations are legitimized. This type of analysis interrogated the assumptive groundings of special education in the district, and how these have been taken-for-granted and normalized in the professional knowledge, policies, and practices of the field. Data from multiple sources: semi-structured interviews, observations, multimodal forms of communication, observation journal, and researcher reflexive journal produced findings within four dominant discourses---the philosophical understanding of inclusion discourse, the contextual discourse, the politics of leading discourse, and the logistics of inclusive schooling discourse. The normative understanding of inclusion within this district is anchored in a structure of difference, emphasized through ability. The areas of commonalities among and within these discourses, where tensions and contradictions lie, include the continuum of segregating spaces, the utility of the academic achievement frame, and the necessity of specialists and professionalized knowledge. Future research may entail exploring a radical restructuring of inclusive education, and conducting non-traditional qualitative studies that focus on the relational power dynamics and decision-making processes among district administrators. Implications for practice are also discussed.
Chapter 1

Disciplined Truths about Inclusion and Children with Disabilities

A Partial Understanding of Inclusion

I have an understanding of the philosophical, ethical, theoretical, and practical considerations within the field of special education. As a teacher, I taught children with disabilities in public elementary and high schools in segregated classrooms in resource and self-contained settings; I worked with educators in general education classrooms as a co-teacher as well as on a consultative basis or as a facilitator. My varied experiences as a special education teacher have had a tremendous influence on shaping my perceptions of special education and its relationship to inclusive education. Further, these perspectives have crystallized as a result of my experiences as a special education teacher, my beliefs, and disposition.

My experiences fit within a particular definition of how inclusive education was enacted in the schools of my employment. The central decision surrounding educating children with disabilities at the four schools in which I worked (three elementary and one high school) always focused on placement. The ‘where’ was the determinant indicator that subsequently dictated, to a large extent, the type of services and supports a child received. All decisions made through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process were contingent upon this ‘place’ of instruction and the duration of time that the child remained in this ‘place.’ Within these experiences there was an inclusionary discourse that seemed to fall within the Regular Education Initiative’s stance on educating children with mild and moderate disabilities. Seldom were children with severe
disabilities in inclusive settings, and those that were ‘included’ were limited only to special subjects (e.g., PE, music, art, etc.) and lunch.

While I actively participated in the preservation of using placement decisions to determine the extent to which children with disabilities would be educated alongside typically developing peers, there were numerous instances when I questioned this type of decision making for particular children, only to be faced with backlash from administration or other personnel. It became quite apparent to me that there were other significant factors that shaped these decisions and superseded, at times, a placement decision that may have been more inclusive for the child. Factors such as those related to the number of children with disabilities already placed in inclusive classrooms, the personnel available to provide services, and the time constraints related to scheduling issues hindered the placement decision making for some children. There was always an interrogative aspect about the decisions that I made regarding the children I worked with because I was cognizant of the factors that were impediments to making placement decisions for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. I was a varying exceptionalities teacher who worked in schools that touted inclusion. My understandings of inclusion have been shaped through these experiences and guide this pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the multiple meanings of inclusion and how these understandings shape policies and practices in schooling systems.

This study explores how a leadership team in a school district crystallized their understandings of inclusive education and how these understandings are manifested in the policies, procedures, and practices. This study seeks to illuminate the dynamics of each individual’s role within this leadership team, with particular focus on the ESE Director, along with the team’s collective role in constructing inclusive educational policies and practices for
children with disabilities. An exploration of this type may inform future research, policies and practices particularly regarding theory (re) construction and (re) formulation of definitions and understandings of inclusive education.

**Synoptic View of Special Education**

Special education may be viewed as a separate and parallel educational system with medical, psychological, and scientific foundations (Semmel, Gerber, & MacMillan, 1994; Winzer, 2009). Many professionals within special education receive formalized training, specialized knowledge and skills; they are socialized into a system that functions from a deficit perspective of people with disabilities. These professionals with specific specializations are endowed with knowledge that enables them to use an ‘expert discourse’ (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011) to make decisions that shape the educational experiences and outcomes for children with disabilities. The authoritative nature of this knowledge espoused by professionals regarding people with disabilities is a demarcation of their “power to define and classify others as abnormal and to treat their bodies and minds” (Skrtic, 1995, p. 41). The foundational knowledge of special education is not objective, but is subjectively based upon a “particular historically situated frame of reference” (Skrtic, 1995, p. 38).

The influence of the legislative regulations of special education on the development of legitimated knowledge, research of best practices, and programs of implementation for children with disabilities has been both productive and detrimental. Access to public schooling, supports, and supplementary services opened up discussions about how and where children with disabilities should be educated (Sailor & McCart, 2014). Although the notion of including children with disabilities into the regular education classes was enacted in federal legislation, under the term least restrictive environment, issues arose regarding the interpretation of the
language used in the mandate. Due to the varying ways of understanding this legislative component, a multiplicity of meanings surfaced around inclusion that also questioned the fundamental groundings of this parallel educational system (Andrews et al., 2000). A rift occurred among special education professionals, researchers, and constituents about what inclusive education is, as well as what it looks like in schooling institutions and systems (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006).

Federal Policy

Federal policies have addressed issues of access, participation, and the quality of education of children with disabilities. The Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act (EHA) enacted in 1975, later renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandates a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE component of this legislation stipulates that children with disabilities are to receive an education in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent possible as deemed appropriate. Latitude in interpretation of the LRE mandate relates to how it is enacted (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). Due to differences of interpretations, variability of implementation occurs in schooling systems.

The concept of inclusion is derived from the LRE component of IDEA, and the term originated in the 1980s as a result of the Regular Education Initiative (REI). REI was introduced in 1986 by Madeleine Will to reconfigure the parallel systems of education (i.e., regular and special education) for children with mild and moderate disabilities so they might receive a greater amount of instruction in the regular education classroom. Proponents of REI sought to significantly re-conceptualize the field of special education; whereas, opponents of REI believed that special education may require some improvements without a disruption of its underlying
assumptions (Brantlinger, 1997). In other words, special education is about the practices and procedures utilized by specialists to help children with disabilities acclimate and participate in an established structure of schooling that does consider their special needs. The specialized skills and knowledge of special education professionals are necessary and pertinent for educating children with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). The dichotomization of the stances from full inclusionists to selective inclusionists (Winzer, 2009) unearth a need to critically interrogate the assumptive groundings of special education and how these have been taken-for-granted and normalized in the policies, professional knowledge, and practices of the field.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

A polarizing division formed around the debate of how and where children with disabilities are educated, consequently resulting in the multiple understandings of inclusive education within schools and systems. The term *inclusion* with its multiplicity of meanings, is problematic for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. A recent analysis of the research on inclusive education (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014) has substantiated this rift, they determined there are four different understandings of inclusive education, and concluded that “the operative meaning of inclusion in reviews and empirical research should be much more clearly defined” (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014, p. 265). Furthermore, previous research (Dyson, 1999) has illuminated the complexities surrounding the varying understandings of inclusion and how these understandings are complicated within differing discourses.

This study was an exploration into the formation of these discourses of inclusion with a district level ESE leadership team. There is a gap in the research literature concerning ESE Directors and leadership teams, especially regarding inclusive education. Further, there has been no research to date that specifically focuses on the discursive formations of inclusion and
implications of power relations within these discourses. Therefore, this study explores how these
district level personnel participate within this discursive formation which is integral to
understanding how the discourses of inclusion are constructed, practices are normalized, and
power relations are legitimized. A discourse analysis grounded in Foucault’s theories of
power/knowledge and disciplinary power is utilized.

Research Questions:

1. What are the discourses of inclusion for children with disabilities within a particular
   school district?
   a. How do these discourses shape policies, procedures, and practices?
   b. What are the tensions and convergences among and within these discourses?

2. In what ways do the discourses of inclusion legitimize power relations within the
discursive formation of inclusive education of a district ESE leadership team?

Methodological Approach

This is a poststructural study. Denzin and Lincoln (2014) state that poststructuralists
understand that “language is an unstable system of referents, making it impossible to ever
completely capture the meaning or an action, text, or intention” (p. 33). An exploration of the
multiplicity of understandings of inclusion may illuminate how language as part of discursive
formations is a tool that complicates these understandings. Bove explains that discourse
“provides a privileged entry into the poststructural mode of analysis because it is organized and
regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies” (cited
in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). This regulating and constituting effect of discourse(s) is analyzed
utilizing Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power in order to address the
type of power relations enmeshed in the discursive formation of inclusion within a district level
leadership team. Moreover, the analysis is undertaken using Gee’s critical approach to discourse analysis since discourse is “recognized in multiple ways, in partial ways, in contradictory ways, in disputed ways, in negotiable ways…” (Gee, 2011, p. 178).

In this study, I used Gee’s (2011) thinking devices which are known as the tools of inquiry that are questions to ask of the data. Furthermore, a related approach that Jackson and Mazzei (2013) described as, “reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory” (p. 264) was also used. A particular set of findings were produced as a result of this type of analysis. The dominant discourses are explained and instances of commonalities, tensions, and contradictions are represented using a stanza-like formation that Gee (2005) refers to as topic chaining.

An Understanding of Conceptual Terms

Poststructuralism offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those poststructuralism itself might create (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 6).

Foucault

- A discursive formation is a system of ‘regularity’ where social realities (ways of thinking, acting, being) are established via particular ‘regimes of truth.’ Foucault (1972) explains, “its purpose is to maintain discourse in all its many irregularities; and consequently to suppress the theme of a contradiction uniformly lost and rediscovered” (p. 156).
- Disciplinary power is a mechanism of subjection that organizes and controls social reality and cultural practices. It is a coercive type of power, where power is described as “a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Foucault as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 490).
“Power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same power relations” (Foucault, 1972, p. 27).

Gee (Gee, 2011)

- Discourse Analysis: Analyzing language as it is fully integrated with all the other elements that go into social practices (e.g. ways of thinking or feeling, ways of using non-linguistic symbol systems) (p. 9).
- Situated Meaning: Any word or structure in language has a certain meaning potential which is a range of possible meanings that the word or structure can take on in different contexts of use (p. 151). Further, they may not only have different meanings in different contexts, they also take on specific meanings within the specialist domains that recruit them (p. 152).
- Big D Discourse (with a capital D): This type of Discourse is composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening, writing/reading, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing in coordination with objects, tools, and technologies (p. 177). It is not contained within fixed boundaries and can be recognized in multiple, partial, or contradictory ways that are contestable and negotiable (p. 178).

Structure of Dissertation

I presented in this chapter an overview of this study—the rationale, the epistemological foundation, the methodological approach. In the next chapter, the literature reviewed presents the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional aspects that contribute to the multiple meanings and
representations of inclusion in schools, districts, and systems. Chapter 3 explains Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power that undergird the discourse analysis approach that I used to analyze the data collected; additionally the research design for this study is explained. Data analysis occurred through the process of using Gee’s (2011) thinking devices (i.e. tools of inquiry) that stipulate certain questions to ask of the data, and “reading-the data-while-thinking-the-theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 264). As a result of this type of analysis, particular findings were generated.

A presentation of the findings is provided in Chapter 4 that describe the areas of commonalities, the tensions, and contradictions that surfaced through four dominant discourses of inclusion: the philosophical understandings of inclusion discourse, the contextual discourse, the politics of leading discourse, and the logistics of inclusive schooling discourse. The findings unearth the unquestioned assumption of inclusion underlying this district’s understanding, which is anchored in a structure of ability differences that creates and sustains the need for the continuum of segregating spaces, the utility of the academic achievement frame, and necessity of the expertise of specialists and professionalized knowledge. This understanding discursively shapes the policies, procedures, and practices of the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of this study’s contribution to the existing knowledge and literature of the field. The implications for research and practice are highlighted. Specifically, further exploration is needed with regard to radically restructuring inclusive education, conducting similar Foucauldian poststructural studies with district leadership teams focused upon the relational power dynamics involved in the decision-making processes, and problematizing whole district reform inclusive efforts. Focused areas for implications for practice include
capacity building for principals, developing and maintaining supportive relationships among
district personnel and school administrators, and understanding the issues surrounding quickly
scaling up reform efforts in the district.

Conclusion

This study explored the discursive formation of inclusion of an ESE leadership team in
one school district in the state of Florida. A critically-oriented discourse analysis approach
grounded in Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power is used.
Utilizing Foucault’s theoretical framework and Gee’s discourse analytical approach illuminate
the complexity of the construction and maintenance of an understanding of inclusion within a
district level leadership team. This study explored the understanding of inclusive education via
discourses of inclusion and how power is implicated in this productive process. Research
literature is minimal regarding district personnel and their leadership team pertaining to their
understanding of inclusive education, which subsequently shapes policies, procedures, and
practices within the district.
Chapter 2
Conundrums in Inclusive Education

Introduction

Sociopolitical, cultural, and economic influences have substantially shaped decisions and processes surrounding institutionalizing and/or educating people with disabilities. The advent of public schooling and industrialization, the era of eugenics and social Darwinism, the proliferation of intelligence testing and statistics, and the rise of immigrants to the United States, added much complexity to the construct of (dis)ability and who needs ‘special’ education (Winzer, 1993, 2009). Beginning in the nineteenth century, special education became a parallel and formalized system of education whose foundation is medical, psychological, and scientific. Induction into its professions require formalized training, specialized knowledge and skills, and socialization into its value system and norms that espouse a deficit perspective. “Special education remains steeped in an expert discourse that privileges the opinions and perspectives of professionals over learners and families” (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 273). This expert discourse is entangled in cultural practices and social realities that instantiates regimes of power and truth (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982) within a particular local and historical context.

Though special education has established rights and services for children with disabilities from legislation to participation in public schools to innovative pedagogical practices, the cultural, social, political, economic mores and interaction among social groups have been
instrumental in the construction of understandings of disability and educating children with disabilities through dialogical and discursive means. Skrtic (1995) argues that, “Special education must confront the fact that there is nothing inherently true or correct about its professional knowledge, practices, and discourses” (p. 20). Failure to interrogate its underlying assumptions and theories, with functionalist foundations, perpetuates old problems in new ways. The tapered focus on procedures and practices implicates an absence of critical confrontation of the positivist epistemological and theoretical underpinnings. Therefore, professional knowledge and practices become legitimized through discursive relations regarding understandings of disability and difference which shape how children with disabilities are educated.

According to the 37th annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2015), the majority of children with disabilities attend neighborhood schools and receive a free education and are provided with specialized educational learning experiences and supplementary services in inclusive settings. What does ‘inclusive’ mean? There is a multiplicity of understandings of inclusive education and what it looks like in schools (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006), and these understandings are grounded in the fundamental questions regarding the foundations of special education and its purposes. As a result, a ‘special education divide’ has developed within this community which has “crystallized in distinct views about appropriate directions for special education reform” (Andrews et al., 2000, p. 258). The polarizing argument focuses upon educating all children with disabilities in the ‘regular’ classrooms to educating them within a continuum of services model that concentrates on the place where they are educated (i.e., least restrictive to more restrictive classrooms). There is a rift among special education professionals, researchers, and
constituents not only about the definition of inclusive education or inclusion, but what it looks like in schooling institutions as well as its effectiveness.

The review of literature provides the historical context of inclusive education for children with disabilities, how inclusive education is at the center of a special education divide, and the underlying assumptions that illuminate the multiplicity of understandings of inclusion. First, the legislative and legal foundations are described, then the understandings of inclusion are discussed, followed by an explanation of the conceptual approaches to disability. The chapter ends with the empirical studies of inclusive education and the direction of the methodological approach of this study.

**Legislative and Legal Foundations**

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s broadcasted the inequalities and mistreatment of minorities in the United States. This movement’s struggles and progress, along with the women’s movement and the gay and lesbian movement, influenced the Disability Rights Movement which began in the 1960s (Berger, 2013). The decision of the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was integral to the field of special education because the discussion and actions surrounding the ruling regarded the unsegregated equal access to a public education. The civil rights issue of the right to a public education became a major battle for advocates of children with disabilities.

**Legislative Foundations**

The National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Special Education Act of 1961, and the Mental Retardation Facility and Community Center Construction Act of 1963 were the legislative mandates that specifically addressed the field of special education (related to
specialize training of teachers). While these policies opened a doorway to educate children with disabilities in the public school, they also created a separate system where specialized personnel were required to meet their needs. Furthermore, these policies, “legislatively enacted-assumptions of difference, including a perceived need for students with disabilities to be educated differently and apart from typically developing youth” (LaNear & Frattura, 2007, p. 100).

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was authorized. It included the Title 1 provision that provided funding to serve children from impoverished homes and students with disabilities. Established around this time was the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) whose federal priorities included budgetary responsibilities and grant programmatic decisions related to special education (Martin, 2013). Since the federal government could not claim authority over states’ decisions on educational issues, the BEH was involved in creating provisions to states’ voluntary plans that were submitted to receive federal funding. The funding formulas were contingent upon the number of children enrolled in special education, so states “that increased the number of children served, or served more children proportionately than other states, would receive more money” (Martin, 2013, p. 147). Reporting the number of children in special education and within categorizations of disabilities was directly tied to money allocations (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Although the intention of the BEH after 1975 was to ensure that the components of Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act (such as free and appropriate public education and rights to due process) were being implemented, the funding mechanism created issues among and within states, and new categorizations and types of disabilities were formed (Brantlinger, 1997). Furthermore, there were problems for particular children with disabilities, such as the disproportionate representation of children of color within certain
disability categories and restrictive educational placements (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Waitoller, Artiles, & Cheney, 2010).

**Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act.** As a result of parent and advocacy groups and the disability movement, the Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act (EHA) was enacted in 1975. The purpose of this act was to guarantee a free appropriate public education and related services, ensure that children and families are provided with due process protections, provide financial support to assist states and localities in compliance with this law, and to assess and assure their efforts to educate all children with disabilities (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.). One important facet of this legislation is termed the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) where children with disabilities are to be educated in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent possible as deemed appropriate by a team of professionals and the parents.

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)).

This principle presupposes the existence of a continuum of services where some children with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom and others in more restrictive placements such as resource classrooms, self-contained classrooms, and separate schools or institutions.
According to Haines and Turnbull (2013) there are three overlapping values behind the LRE principle: academic benefit, social benefit, and cost containment which are “optimally advanced through an integrated, inclusive system of education” (p.74). Some argue there are fewer positive outcomes when children with disabilities are educated in segregated settings (Hardman & Dawson, 2008). Children, with and without disabilities, when educated in the same classroom develop an understanding of differences, value each other, and create friendships (Carter, Cushing, Clark, & Kennedy, 2005). Moreover, the academic and learning outcomes of these children are greater in inclusive settings than segregated placements (Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2008-2009). Further, the allocation and creative use of resources can foster a climate of schooling that addresses all children’s needs in unique ways. Sailor and Roger (2005) proposes an alternative option to educating children with disabilities in the regular education classroom, one that matches support systems to the child’s needs through a multi-tiered system of supports, where special education is seen as a service and not a place (Sailor & McCart, 2014). All children are afforded the services and resources without a focus on the categorizations of disability, severity, and other distinguishing characteristics. Integrated systems of education can be more inventive in how they utilize their resources (Sailor & Roger, 2005), but the underlying values and assumptions about educating children with disabilities may hinder this type of education.

Mainstreaming. Mainstreaming was the term used to describe voluntary access and integration of children with disabilities in the general classroom (Brantlinger, 1997); the main focus was access to this setting to increase the positive interactions between children with disabilities and those without disabilities, which was considered the “essence of mainstreaming” (Martin, 1973, p.1). The barriers to mainstreaming were, “the attitudes, fears, anxieties and
possibly overt rejection” (Martin, 1973, p. 2) of peers, regular education teachers, and administrators; training teachers and logistical issues (e.g., scheduling and materials) were additional constraints. Mainstreaming opened up opportunities for some children with disabilities to access schooling in the regular education classroom but created barriers for others. Since “the legislative structure that undergirds special education is drawn in language that stresses categories or surface variables” (Reynolds & Ballow, 1973, p. 146), the barriers Martin (1973) explained were realized in discriminatory practices and maintained the status quo (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). “There is a mythical quality to our approach to mainstreaming. It has faddish properties, and my concern is that we do not deceive ourselves because we so earnestly seek to rectify the ills of segregation” (Martin, 1973, p. 4). Though mainstreaming created issues of implementation within the local context, research on integrated programs had promising outcomes.

Some research studies on integration were conducted prior to the enactment of EHA. Bradfield, Brown, Kaplan, Rikert, and Stannard (1973) found that both children with disabilities and their regular education counterparts demonstrated academic and social benefits more than their peers in segregated settings. Guerin and Szatlocky (1973) conducted their study from a district perspective and reported that principal and teacher attitudes were positive for all children in the integrated class. Similarly, Affleck, Lehning and Brown (1973) studied schools as part of a district wide conversion effort to integrate children with disabilities and reported academic and social gains including a reduction of stigma and more efficiency in the use of funds. These three studies demonstrated efforts to integrate children with disabilities in a systematic and procedural manner as part of larger district initiatives. Once enacted, EHA continued the formalization of parallel systems of education: regular education and special education, and integration of
children with disabilities in the general classroom was left to the decision making of the localized professionals.

**Regular Education Initiative and Inclusion.** The concept of inclusion was a derivative of LRE and the term first surfaced in the 1980s as a result of the Nation at Risk Report on the failure of the American public school system to prepare its citizens for a competitive world (Winzer, 2009) and established a need for reform focused on testing and accountability. In 1986 Madeleine Will, as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, released a report questioning the effectiveness of special education programs and specified the need for collaborative efforts of general and special educators in educating children with learning problems, particularly those with mild and moderate disabilities. This report, the Regular Education Initiative (REI), is where the term “Inclusion grew out (or is a renaming of REI)” (Brantlinger, 1997, p. 428). This initiative and the previous mainstreaming debate did not interrogate the assumptive groundings of special education; instead, it only questioned its practices (Skrtic, 1991). By not addressing the entrenched roots of special education, its functionalist foundations are maintained and may cause the same problems to re-surface.

The policies of EHA are distributive, categorical, and regulatory, indicative of the construction of policies in the 1970s (Honig, 2006). “Policies are systems of thought and action used to regulate and organize behavior…when policies define a problem, they construct a way of seeing those affecting or affected by the problem” (Stein, 2004, p. 5). EHA regulated the place to be educated and codified that exclusion in the regular education classroom was an option in the continuum of services. EHA organized children categorically in order to receive services and fiscal appropriations, and it established a professional authority that sustained deficit notions of disability.
The debates of the 1980s and the 1990s surrounding inclusive education were contentious. Researchers, practitioners, leaders, and policy makers were dichotomized into “abolitionists and conservationists, inclusionists and traditionalists, full inclusionists and selective inclusionists” (Winzer, 2009, p. 208); those who rallied for children with disabilities to be educated completely in the general education classrooms and those who saw the need for a continuum of services, and variations between them.

Proponents of REI ranged from those who believed in full inclusion to those who supported inclusion only for children with mild and moderate disabilities. These proponents saw promise in general education taking responsibility for educating all children. There were some who supported the inclusion of children with mild and moderate disabilities with the exclusion of those who had severe disabilities (Jenkins, Pious, & Petersen, 1988; Lilly, 1987), and others who called for the full inclusion of all children, especially those with severe intellectual disabilities (Snell, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

Opponents of REI held firmly to the established scientifically-grounded special education field by expressing the need for the specialized services and training of special educators in order to educate children with disabilities. These opponents support the already established and separate special educational system (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 1989; Singer, 1988), and they do not believe that general educators should be given responsibility for educating children with disabilities; the onus lies in the specialized educators within a separate system. Furthermore, opponents were concerned that REI would replace the rights established through EHA and circumstances would revert back to pre-EHA conditions for children with disabilities (Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988). This ‘inclusion’ debate continued in judicial battles, legislative interpretations, research communities, and within local districts and schools.
Litigated Groundings

Parent and advocacy groups were crucial in judiciary proceedings involving children with disabilities that addressed the inequitable nature of the extant circumstances that surrounded their education. Specifically, *PARC v. Commonwealth* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of DC* (1972) were litigation cases that were instrumental in the enactment of PL 94-142 (EHA) because the constitutional rights of children with disabilities (the 14th amendment) were argued, and thus they were afforded the rights of equal access to a public education (in the respective states). These two court cases were highly influential in the enactment of EHA.


**Pertinent LRE Court Cases.** The first federal court case to interpret part of the EHA, *Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* (1982), was about a girl named Amy who was a deaf kindergartener. Her parents requested a sign language interpreter for her in public school, but the school refused to provide one. The district court and court of appeals sided with the parents. The Supreme Court, however, did not stating that sufficient support services were
provided and Amy did benefit educationally. States are not required to ‘maximize’ the potential of the child (102 S. Ct. 3034). This case is the foundation for which subsequent rulings have interpreted ‘appropriate’ in free and appropriate education in EHA.

The following court cases challenged the provision of LRE for children with disabilities and provided a foundation of general standards or tests that could be utilized in determining LRE placements (Alquraini, 2011; Rozalski, Stewart, & Miller, 2010). In Roncker v. Walter, a 9-year-old boy with cognitive disability was placed in a segregated school without any interaction with typical peers. The Court of Appeals ruled that the child receive services in the general education setting and overturned the previous ruling [700 F.2d 1058 (6th Cir. 1983)]. In Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education, a 6-year-old boy with an intellectual disability who received instruction half-day in kindergarten classes and half-day in special education classes did not make enough progress. He was then placed almost entirely in special education classes except for lunch. The Court of Appeals agreed with the previous ruling and concluded that even with supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom, Daniel did not receive an appropriate education [874 F.2d 1036 (5th Cir. 1989)]. In Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education v. Rachel H., an 11-year-old with severe cognitive disability was placed in a special education class and participated within general education for non-academic activities. Parents appealed to the Circuit Court which decided that the district failed to provide evidence against this child being educated in the regular classroom [14 F.3d 1398 (9th Cir. 1994)].

These three cases, Roncker v. Walter, Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education, and Sacramento City Unified School District v. Rachel H., exemplify how the courts have applied different standards to assess LRE requirements and have become the foundations for future rulings regarding this component of EHA (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014).

According to Lipsky and Gartner (1997), overall these “full inclusion cases” established that school districts had to consider regular education for all children irrespective of severity of disability and should be the actual practice not rhetoric. The numerous ways that the LRE component has been interpreted are due to the political language used. Ambiguity, as explained by Edelman (2001), “is an innate characteristic of language and is especially conspicuous in political language because by definition politics concerns conflicts of interest” (p. 80). The ambiguity of language in this special education legislation serves the interest of particular groups such as professionals trained with specialized knowledge and skills.

A focus on the legislative, legal, and political issues is not enough to gauge the severity of the contentiousness of the issues of inclusive education and the legitimizing practices of special education without questioning its grounding assumptions. A deeper understanding is required which involves an interrogation of the definitions of inclusion and the theories of disability.

**Understandings of Inclusion**

Researchers and practitioners continue to struggle with the conundrum of defining inclusive education (Slee, 2008). Inclusion typically is discussed in relation to children with disabilities being educated in their neighborhood schools and in regular education classrooms instead of separate facilities or self-contained classrooms (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, &
Christensen, 2006). Some believe that inclusion is not about the physical placement of children (Sailor & Roger, 2005; Slee, 2008; Thomazet, 2009) while others view the necessity for placement as a consideration in inclusive decision making (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010; Sasso, 2001). However, there does not seem to be relative consensus of the meaning of this concept since multiple understandings exist (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Goransson & Nilholm, 2014; Loreman, 2007; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005), and these interpretations are manifested in numerous ways in schools and school systems.

A recently published article critically analyzing the research on inclusive education from 2004-2012 found that inclusion was defined in multiple ways; specifically, there were four categorical definitions reported based upon the conceptual analysis of 20 articles (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). These included, (a) placement definition- inclusion as placement of students with disabilities/in need of special support in general education classrooms (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009); (b) specified individualized definition- inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of students with disabilities/students in need of special support; (c) general individualized definition- inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils (Angelides, 2005; Thomazet, 2009); and (d) community definition- inclusion as creation of communities with specific characteristics (Naraian, 2011).

This review identified a need for clarification of what is inclusive education in studies and reviews of inclusive education and explained that there is a lack of research regarding the factors and interventions needed to increase inclusion in schools. The authors call for research with “experimental and quasi-experimental designs which operationalize inclusion in a clear-cut manner” as well as “correlational research and in-depth studies of environments with high levels of inclusion” (p. 277). This type of research continues the positivist approach to research and
maintains the functionalist assumptions of special education. Dyson (2014) responded to this Göransson and Nilhom (2014) article stating:

The review methodology employed by Göransson and Nilholm, and by ourselves before them, fails to take due account of the diverse purposes for which research might be undertaken. It fails, in particular, to recognise that, for many inclusion researchers, inclusive education is not a set of practices whose effects can be evaluated, but is a principle (or, more accurately, a set of principles) which is embodied in different ways in different contexts. (p. 282)

Some researchers emphasize practices and procedural characteristics of inclusion in determination of its effectiveness, while other researchers focus on the philosophical and theoretical understandings to address deeper issues regarding the nuances of this concept within specific localities.

**Conceptual Model of Inclusion**

Norwich (2002) proposed four conceptual models to explain inclusion in schools. The *full non-separatist inclusion* model includes all students without any additional supports or services. The *participation in the same place* model provides additional or different supports for students with disabilities for participation in the general classroom and not in separate locations. The *focus on individual need* model focuses on meeting the students’ needs and is not about where those services are provided; students may have their needs met in the general classroom or in separate settings depending on their individual needs. The *elective inclusion* model is based upon the preference of the parents and the child where upon the education system provides the services and supports in the setting selected by the parents and the child. These models
illuminate how inclusion may take form in schools depending on the context, the supports, and/or the needs of the child.

**Discourse of Inclusion**

In 1999 Dyson explored the discourses of inclusion which he differentiated between the rationale and realization discourses. The *rationale* for inclusion dimension critically analyzes special education and contains the rights and ethics discourse and the efficacy discourse. The *rights and ethics discourse* concentrates on children’s right to an education and the schools’ role in the reproduction of inequalities for students with disabilities. The *efficacy discourse* focuses upon the cost-efficiency of inclusive schools, programs within the schools such as segregated classrooms, and separate schools. The second dimension, the *realization* of inclusion, is not “something that has to be fought for, but as something that results from taking the right sort of action at different levels of policy-making and implementation” (p. 43). This dimension contains the political discourse and the pragmatic discourse. The *political discourse* is concerned with struggle; “it is the advocacy of the need for struggle and the delineation of segregationist practices and concepts” (p. 42). The *pragmatic discourse* describes the characteristics and traits that are inherent in inclusive schools such as values, curricula, and pedagogical skills and creates practical recommendations to implement inclusive practices in schools and systems. Moreover, this discourse answers, what does inclusion look like? The ambiguity of inclusion is a result of the interaction of different discourses.

“The transition from a traditional special education system, parallel to general education, to an inclusive system requires political work and struggle” (Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006, p. 262). Special education is a system consisting of specialists, professionals, and separate educational and training institutions; the survival of this system and its constituents
may be questioned at the promotion of an inclusive system. “The establishment of special education creates an alternative location for the education of problematic children whose needs and demands might otherwise challenge the established order of regular schooling” and whose specialists “exercise their expertise and maintain their privileged positions” (Dyson, 1999, p.40). While these discourses of inclusion are delineated for the purposes of explanation, they are intricately interrelated which augments the complexity of this issue and contributes to the multiplicity of meanings and understandings.

So what constitutes an inclusive system, an inclusive school or an inclusive classroom? What does inclusion imply? Who gets to be included and consequently excluded? How are these decisions made and in what contexts? These questions do not generate simplistic answers. To understand the complexity of the issue of inclusion, contemporary theories of disability central to understanding rationale and realization discourses (Dyson, 1999) are explicated to perhaps illuminate reasons for the divisiveness of inclusion’s meanings and applications.

Conceptual Approaches to Disability

Disability means what? To whom?

In the western world of the 18th century and the emergence of industrialization, disability was constructed to meet economic, religious, and sociopolitical needs (Winzer, 1993). “Disability was not an innocuous boundary; rather, it was a liability in social and economic participation. People perceived as having a disability—whatever the type or degree of disability—were lumped under the broad categorization of ‘idiot’ (Winzer, 2009, p. 2) and later labeled ‘feebleminded,’ which led to the establishment of asylums and institutions some of which were for educational purposes. Around this time, the definitions used for a person with a
disability were generalized and primitive because of the reliance on medical professionals’
determinations. Not until federal funds or monies from agencies were tied to this population
were specific definitions needed. For instance, provision of federal and state aid to people who
are blind warranted a definition that would clearly demarcate the ‘blind’ from the ‘not blind’ in
order to receive aid (Winzer, 1993). A proliferation of definitions developed to meet the
demands of those doing the defining for specific purposes. Another example is that laws may
stipulate services for people with disabilities and have stringent and defined requirements;
insurance companies and other agencies could have different criteria with definitions of
‘disability’ that are contradictory or a variant of others (Berger, 2013). Determination of specific
definitions of disabilities is an implication of labels, which may have harmful effects on people
with disabilities.

(Dis)Abling Effects

A common effect of labeling on people with disabilities is associated with the stigma
attached to these markers of distinction. In 1963 Irving Goffman’s seminal work on stigma
explained that it is an “attribute that is deeply discrediting…” and that a person who is
stigmatized is “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one”
(p. 3). It is a relational aspect that constitutes the stigmatized. Since labels or categories change
over time, it may connote meanings of derision or become contemporary terms which are more
acceptable to society (Norwich, 2002). It is a matter of the cultural, political, historical, and
social contexts of the terminology.

Several scholars note that special education could be viewed as complicit in the
preservation of the need to ostracize and problematize the different. “We contribute to the
delinquency of the general educations since we remove pupils that are problems for them and
thus reduce their need to deal with individual differences” (Dunn, 1968, p. 20). Children are labeled with a disability and become “objects to be treated, changed, improved, and made ‘normal’” (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 19). Their limitations are magnified and defining mechanisms are authoritatively delivered thus rendering the need for specialized services. “Our constructed categories, although intended to approach a more just arrangement, often become stigmas for the people who occupy them. These categories then reinforce the unjust situation that they were created to remedy” (Stein, 2004, p. xvii). These classification schemes may delimit their educational opportunities and legitimize their (dis)ability.

Kauffman and Badar (2013) explained that the identification of children with emotional or behavioral disorders is laden with stigma and explored how to make this label less stigmatizing. Particularly these researchers suggested that realities of differences should be accepted and discussed naturally and how difference impact the education and social benefits for these children with disabilities. Further, they discussed the benefits of special education and the specialized skills and knowledge needed by teachers to help these children succeed in schooling settings. Stigmatizing labels, such as those associated with disability categorizations, shape the schooling experiences and outcomes of children with disabilities.

Ableism. Hehir (2005) describes a related disabing effect of categorizing in the use of the term *ableism* which means “deeply held negative attitudes toward disability” (p.10). He purported that school systems are fundamentally grounded within ableist thought and that these negative views and resulting subsequent actions should change so that children with disabilities are valued. The common thread of the definitions of ableism is embedded in the discrimination and oppression that are experienced by people with disabilities (Berger, 2013; Overboe, 1999). Ableism is a taken for granted dominant ideology that structures how people with disabilities live
To educate people who are deaf, blind, or visually impaired or students with EBD and other categorizations (Hehir, 2005), strong consideration is needed about their ways of learning and being and how educators and the educational system impose schooling upon them that devalues their experiences and culture resulting from espousing an ableist mentality.

**Conceptualizations of Disability**

To explain the concepts of disability, first impairment and disability need to be defined. Berger (2013) describes impairment as the “biological or physiological condition that entails the loss of physical, sensory, or cognitive function, and disability refers to an inability to perform a personal or socially necessary task because of that impairment or the societal reaction to it” (p. 6). The definitions of these two terms in relation to each other is important in understanding the differing conceptualizations of disability.

**Medical Model of Disability.** The medical model individualizes impairments as disabling conditions imposed from diagnosis, labels, prevention, and seeks curative methods that approximates the ‘normal’ condition. Meanings associated with disability are grounded in personal tragedy theory (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). Disability is perceived as individual pathology with functional limitations within “culturally determined deficits” (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 11), and the people with disabilities are “deficient and inherently inferior” and need to be changed (Berger, 2013, p. 27) because ableist views are ingrained in society. The medical profession authoritatively governs the ‘normality’ of bodies and related experiences. This is the model that characterizes how our schooling institutions and systems function with regard to children with disabilities, or those who may be considered as having a disability.
**Social Model of Disability.** The social model states that disability is not individually located but socially constructed through society’s reactions to impairments. This approach is a critique of the medical model in that the restrictive and oppressive barriers that limit participation in society are caused by society and not due to the impairment. The social model originated in the United Kingdom and distinguishes between impairment and disability, acknowledges the power relationships between the people with disabilities and those without disabilities, and trusts the ‘disabled’ experiences over “institutionalized or professional knowledge” (Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014). Oliver and Barnes (2012) recognized the criticisms of this model which were also echoed by Shakespeare (2014). There is a denial or un-appreciation for the experiences of the individual with disabilities resulting from the impairment; the model focuses on barrier removal which cannot address the totality of restrictions experienced by people with disabilities. Impairment and disability are both social constructs; thus, the distinction is deceptive. The recognition that diversity ranges (physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional/behavioral) and yet shares the commonality of the “placement outside the parameters of normalcy” illuminates the social model’s intention to question “the parameters of normalcy, including who defines and enforces those borders, and most crucially the repercussions for those both inside and outside of these culturally drawn and fluctuating lines” (Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014, p. 1125).

**Cultural Model of Disability.** The cultural model is dominant in the United States and views people with disabilities as a minority group, resulting from the Civil Rights Movement. Those with disabilities have less status than those who do not have disabilities, and experience continual inequalities and discrimination (Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014). Disability becomes a group identity, similarly to other minority groups, which is “part of the broader fabric
of human diversity, and as a site of cultural resistance to socially constructed conceptions of normality” (Berger, 2013, p. 29). This minority group approach dichotomizes those with disabilities and those without disabilities, promotes differences, and contains the element of the societal barriers imposed on the people with disabilities (political, structural, economic) as described by the United Kingdom’s social model approach (Shakespeare, 2014). Impairment and disability are not to be overcome but to be welcomed and appreciated. Inclusive education may foster this notion of people with disabilities as a minority group in its efforts to integrate and value differences.

**Empirical Studies of Inclusive Education**

Now that the legislative and legal foundations, the understandings of inclusion, and the conceptual approaches to disability have been explained, the empirical research on inclusive education is described. Much of the research is focused at the local classroom or school level and on the practicalities of implementation.

**Whole School Efforts**

A review of studies on whole school inclusive efforts was conducted by Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan (2007). There were 25 case design studies that utilized interviews as data collection about the structures and processes of the inclusion models and yielded that teacher perspectives dominated the research. The research on school cultures were based on teachers’ beliefs and views of their schooling institutions. Other studies focused on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities (Harrower, 1999; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2008-2009; Wehmeyer, Lattin, & Lapp-Rincker, 2003); the efficacy of inclusive programs for students with mild disabilities (Manset & Semmel, 1997; McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey,
2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011); students perspectives on inclusion (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012); inclusion in secondary education contexts (Casale-Giannola, 2012); the impact of inclusion on students with and without disabilities and their teachers (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Heiman, 2004; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Priestley & Rabiee, 2002; Salend & Duhaney, 1999); principals’ perspectives (Salisbury, 2006; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008); and parents views and attitudes about inclusion (deBoer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010; Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Another review of the research focused on studies about the effect of inclusion on children without disabilities. There were 26 studies whose findings documented academic and social outcomes. Effective inclusive programs were found to be systematic with an intense commitment from multiple stakeholders that included parents, students, and school personnel (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007). Overall, research on whole school efforts related to inclusive education focuses on the practices, procedures, and perspectives of various stakeholders. This body of research addresses the practicability of inclusive education.

**Structure and Practices of Inclusive Education**

Studies also focused on particular practices and structures of inclusive education. Some focused on pedagogy (Ware, 2006); adaptations to curriculum and instruction (McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, Jorgensen, & Turner, 2006); the collaborative modes of instruction (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012); multi-tiered systems of supports such as response to intervention (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010) and Universal Design for Learning (Hitchcock, 2002), as well as schools as organizations (Hulgin & Drake, 2011). More research is needed regarding organizational and cultural conditions needed for inclusion (Frattura & Capper, 2006).
District Level Inclusive Efforts

A limited number of studies were conducted at the district level. One was a four year longitudinal study of middle schools within one district regarding the sustainability of inclusive school reform. This study found that inclusion was not sustained due to change of leadership, teacher turnover, and state and district assessment policy change (Sindelar, Schearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). Another was a seven year longitudinal study on district wide systemic change efforts related to inclusive education (Ryndak, Reardon, Benner, & Ward, 2007). This study concluded that systemic changes were sustainable despite changes in district leadership and personnel. Both studies involved multiple actors at different levels (teacher, principal, district and university personnel). However, the studies did not specifically mention the involvement of Exceptional Student Education Directors and leadership teams. Moreover, the research literature on ESE Directors is minimal (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich, 2010; Scanlan, 2009; Toson, Burrello, & Knollman, 2013).

Trouble with Implementation Studies. Honig (2006) explains that there are three dimensions of implementation: policy, people, and places. Implementation outcomes vary due to the contextual nature of how the three dimensions combine and take shape in procedures and processes. The research literature, as shown above, is inundated with practical recommendations in various forms. Caution is necessary though, because while these recommendations may provide fruitful information regarding implementation of procedures and processes, the context in which these studies are conducted and the variation of historical, socio-political and cultural underpinnings within these context, are significant to our understanding of what inclusion looks like as well the barriers of implementation. A deeper introspection may be needed in order to completely grasp why inclusive practices work in some places and not others.
Intention of Study

There is a gap in the research literature about district level leaders, particularly Exceptional Student Education Directors (ESE) and leadership teams especially with regard to inclusive education. No articles were found that studied the discourse(s) surrounding inclusive education at this level. Moreover, a significant aspect missing in the inclusion literature is that the issue of power has hardly been discussed critically (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006; Ferri & Connor, 2005). This study addresses these gaps in an interrelated manner. I explored how the discursive formation (Foucault, 1972) of inclusion within a district leadership team shape policies, procedures, and practices within a school district, as well as how the power/knowledge nexus (Foucault, 1982) and disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977) institutionalize and legitimize particular truth(s) about the inclusion of children with disabilities as constructed by this team of leaders. Researchers, policy makers, and practitioners may gain a deeper understanding about how an ESE leadership team discursively participate in shaping inclusive education within a district.

Summary

From this review, the literature on inclusion or inclusive education heavily focuses on a particular type of research. The majority of the literature is empirically based and there is a need for more philosophical or theoretical research (Artiles, 2003; Paul, French, & Cranston-Gingras, 2002). Efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness research on inclusion flooded the literature which creates difficulty in problematizing the issue and being critically reflexive (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Normalizing discourses which produce talk and practices of efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness will implicitly and explicitly be reductionist of understandings of inclusion. For some researchers, who subscribe to foundational ‘truths’ of the field of special
education or who view inclusion as an issue that can be resolved through expressing particular characteristics and traits in addition to utilizing certain curricula or pedagogical skills, this may be sufficient. However, there are departures in epistemological perspectives that could inform thinking and theorizing about inclusive education. Many within the special education research community have not embraced or extended appreciation for these perspectives (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Sasso, 2001), and a perpetuation of the positivistic paradigm still undergirds the field. To address this multiparadigmatic dilemma, moral and ethical issues should be discussed. The power relations that are ingrained within these discourses of inclusion shape the policies, decisions and practices of inclusive education.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the legislative and legal discourses, the theories of understanding disability discourses (i.e., social model, medical model, cultural model), and the empirical studies that address differing views of inclusive education in order to gain a deeper understanding of this confounding issue. The next chapter addresses the foundational assumptions grounding this study, the utility of a critically-oriented discourse analysis, and how Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power are used in analysis. Moreover, the research design is presented.
Chapter 3
Methodology: A Discursive Analysis

Introduction

This study illuminates the multiplicity of meanings of inclusion through a district level leadership team’s discursive formation of inclusive education and explores how ESE directors and related personnel shape policies, practices, and procedures. Discourse analysis is used to describe and critique the discursive practices that shape and shift understandings of inclusion and how power is implicated in this productive process. This chapter’s focus is the plan of action to undertake a study grounded in Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge, disciplinary power, and discursive formations and informed by the philosophical underpinnings of poststructuralism. First, a truncated overview of the tenets of poststructuralism are explained, then Foucault’s theories are described with an emphasis on applications to this study, and a description of the utility of discourse analysis to explore a district level team’s discursive formation of inclusion is provided. This chapter ends with the research design that elucidates the manner in which this study was conducted.

A Poststructural Study

There are some commonly shared principles of poststructuralism though it is not a term of “homogeneity, singularity, and unity” (Pillow, 2000, p. 22). Varied in their understandings of theoretical approaches, methods, and practices, poststructural theorists converge in how the concepts of language, power, knowledge, truth, subjectivity, and reality are understood.
Language produces reality; thus reality is a social construction entangled within different and competing discourses where meaning is legitimized, maintained, and evolving. There is a “tenuous relation between language and meaning” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 968). In the same vein, there is no universal truth; instead, there are multiple truths constituted as part of discursive practices that are contextual and specific. In addition to being suspicious of truth claims, poststructuralists problematize grand narratives and totalizing discourses. These metanarratives through power relations, produce knowledge and subjectivities while simultaneously constructing normative boundaries through shared cultural practices. Therefore, poststructuralism is understood to be, as Britzman explains, that “all categories are unstable, all experiences are constructed, all reality is imagined, all identities are produced, and all knowledge provokes uncertainties, misrecognitions, ignorances, and silences (as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 503). The impermanence of truth, reality, knowledge and language are discursively contingent upon relations of power. Foucault’s theoretical framings of power, knowledge and discourse encapsulate and advance certain understandings of these tenets of poststructuralism and their applicability to this study.

**Michel Foucault’s Theories**

Using the intellectual tradition of Foucault, the selected theories address the institutional, cultural, sociopolitical, and historical underpinnings of this study. The plurality of meanings of inclusion are explored through discursive formations of district level leadership teams and illuminate and critique the interrelational complexities of power, knowledge, and discourse.

**Power/Knowledge.** Power is characterized by relations. These relations happen among groups and individuals as an “ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one another” (Foucault, 1982, p. 786). Power, exercised as such, is productive in that it produces
reality and truth. “The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). Power and knowledge are intricately intertwined; each constitutes the other and does not function separately (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Power/knowledge relations are entangled in social practices discursively and therefore generate truth claims that may serve as a process to discipline ways of thinking, being, and acting. As a regulative process, power/knowledge relations are integral to understanding how individuals or groups govern and are governed, (i.e., discipline or are disciplined).

**Disciplinary Power.** Disciplinary power is a mechanism of subjection that organizes and regulates social reality and cultural practices. It is a productive type of power, where power is described as “a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Foucault as cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 490). The dispersion of these practices is regulated through and by the individual or group. Foucault (1977) explains, “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (p. 170). Individuals subject and are subjected with this type of power.

There are three devices required of disciplinary power: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination. Hierarchical observation is a continual surveillance that functions as a network of relations top down, bottom up, and laterally (Foucault, 1977). Educational institutions are disciplined to function in this way through monitoring, training, pedagogy, and inspection. Normalizing judgment is a collective of norms and operational practices that characterize ways to behave and how to think. An imposition of homogeneity also illuminates individualities; it then becomes possible to “measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184). In disciplinary institutions there is a constant supervision (of and by those with
supervisory roles) to normalize by comparing, differentiating, and valuing. The examination combines the other two devices, hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment, and qualifies, classifies, and punishes through power/knowledge relations and institutionalizing truth. Through individuation, disciplinary writing, and power relations, procedural processes “constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge” (Foucault, 1977, p. 192). These processes are formalized in disciplinary institutions and serve as a punitive mechanism. Relations of power and legitimation and institutionalization of knowledge and truth cannot function independent of discursive practices because there is no totalizing truth or universal knowledge.

**Discursive Formations.** A discursive formation is a system of ‘regularity’ where social realities (ways of thinking, acting, being) are established via particular ‘regimes of truth.’ Foucault (1972) explains, “its purpose is to maintain discourse in all its many irregularities; and consequently to suppress the theme of a contradiction uniformly lost and rediscovered” (p. 156). A particular discourse, such as the discourse of inclusion(s), is maintained through complementary and contradictory relations within and across discourses at a particular time within a specific historical context. These discourses have a political function to institute and disseminate a regime of truth resulting from the power/knowledge nexus, and subsequently techniques and processes are established to preserve this truth. The association of discourses within discursive formations polarizes, binds, reinforces, and is conditional. The ‘regularity’ is a complex system that engages the social, political, cultural, and historical interrelational dimensions.

A discursive analysis of established realities and truths of individuals within disciplined institutions is an interrogation of the discourses that shape subjectivities, produces
power/knowledge, and normalizes social and cultural practices. Foucault (1972) states, “we must also question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar…these divisions…are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalized types: they are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others” (p. 122). This study explores these divisions utilizing discourse analysis.

**Discourse Analysis**

Educational leaders are significant in the creation, enactment, implementation, and sustainability of policies, procedures, and practices regarding inclusion of all children. ESE directors and related personnel are integral to this multi-dimensional world. Their influence on the institutionalization of policies and processes regarding inclusive education for children with disabilities is a focus of this study. ESE directors have “district-level administrative or policymaking duties who have broad authority for management policies and general school district operations related to the instructional program.” They “often report directly to the district school superintendent and supervise other administrative employees” (Section 1012.01 (3)(a), Fla. Stat. 2016).

The literature reviewed on district leadership teams particularly focused on ESE directors and personnel is minimal and nonexistent with regard to discourses of inclusions. There is a crucial need to attend to research at the district level because it is “critical to how policies are interpreted, carried out, and sustained” (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 226). Exploring discourses of inclusion within a district leadership team may provide insight into the power/knowledge relations that establish and maintain regimes of truth(s) and normalizing practices and procedures reflective of these truth(s). Additionally, insight may be gained regarding how the discourses discipline the collective views and construction of policy, procedures, and practices.
Discourse

Discourse is more than language. It is not a something that can be seen, heard, felt…it is ethereal. Foucault (1972) explained:

The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this ‘not-said’ is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. (p. 25)

Discourse becomes normalized through daily discursive practices. Once naturalized, though not fixed, discourse allows for commonality of thinking, decision making, and actions to occur and to be re-fashioned. Discourse in social institutions may produce realities that regulate actions and thought in particular ways (St. Pierre, 2000). Discourses are dynamic. Shifts in thinking may create resistance within particular discourses. Key to this resistance and change lies in power relations which may be analyzed through “the struggle to produce identity and meaning within the structural and discursive limitations of everyday practice” (Ball, 2015, p. 310). The power/knowledge relations and the disciplinary power within a district leadership team provide a space for exploration about how discourses govern and are governed by their views and the construction of policy, procedures, and practices.

Inclusion Discourse. Dyson (1999) explicates four discourses: the rights and ethics discourse, efficacy discourse, political discourse, and pragmatic discourse, which are crucial and inherent aspects of how we understand inclusion or types of inclusions. These discourses contain communal understandings but also share numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. Foucault explains, “…discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy”
Inclusion is highly contested because there are differing understandings of what it is, what it does or should do, what it looks like, and should be. This is a multidimensional issue requiring an approach that allows for the examination of multiple constructions and contradictions; doing otherwise may regulate it to a technocratic process that may produce superficial results.

**Rationale for Research Approach**

This research study uses discourse analysis (DA) as its analytical instrument to engage in an exploration in the discursive formation of inclusion by district leadership teams. DA is not only about the technicalities of language, but about how entrenching socio-political, historical, and cultural issues discursively shape the way we come to understand and make meaning. Analysis from a discourse perspective involves “continually redirecting one’s attention (and the reader’s) to context and usage, partly because usage-in-context has real political implications…discourse analysis is, besides other things, a tool for explicating political issues and conflicts” (Grue, 2015, p. 9). Inclusion of children with disabilities is a political and conflict-ridden issue. A comprehensive analysis of the research on inclusive education was recently published which concluded that, “the operative meaning of inclusion in reviews and empirical research should be much more clearly defined” (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014, p. 265). It is this aim to produce ‘definable’ and agreed upon definitions that continues to divide the educational community and also contributes to the multiple understandings of inclusion. Previous research (Dyson, 1999) has illuminated the complexities surrounding the varying understandings of inclusion and how these understandings are complicated within differing discourses.
Goransson and Nilholm’s (2014) call for a clearly defined operative meaning of inclusion aligns within the post-positivist tradition. Their emphasis on the need for clarification of the definition is to promulgate the notion that research is lacking with regard to the factors and interventions needed to establish and maintain inclusion effectively in schools. Most researchers focus on the specific practices and procedural characteristics of inclusion as a means to understand its effectiveness. Until this definition is agreed upon efficacy studies will continue to be problematic as discussed in the literature review. This study does not seek out a definitive definition of inclusion but in fact, explore the lack of consensus regarding not having a specific agreed upon definition.

A poststructural study utilizing Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power may illuminate the intricacies of discursive formation of inclusion and how truth is normalized and institutionalized in policies and practices of a school district. “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault as cited in Edkins, 1999, p. 54). DA is the mechanism through which this research study is approached.

A Variation of Discourse Analysis

There are two notable variations of discourse analysis that engage a critical view. The current dominating schools of thought, James Paul Gee’s (2005/2011a, 2011b) approach and that of Norman Fairclough (1992, 2013). Both approaches examine how the “macro-structures play out in the interactions, rituals, and traditions” of schooling practices, and all approaches are grounded within the three intellectual traditions of discourse studies, feminist post-structuralism, and critical linguistics (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005, p. 366). Thus, this type of discourse analysis approach focuses “on how language as a cultural tool
mediates relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 367). Discourse is language use as social practice; thus, language is not neutral because it is embedded in political, social, racial, economic, and cultural formations (Rogers et al., 2005).

Norman Fairclough. Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is distinguished from Gee’s approach in that the linguistic aspect of Fairclough’s framework is based on a Hallidayan model of grammatical and textual analysis, mostly prevalent outside of the United States (Gee, 2005); whereas, Gee’s is a hybridization of numerous models. A notable distinction is that Gee (2005) acknowledges Foucault’s major influence to his approach to discourse analysis and credits the foundations of his work to Foucault’s theorization. Fairclough (2013), however, has clearly distanced his approach, that is associated with the critical realist tradition, from Foucault’s but recognizes the narrow utility of particular concepts. “Fairclough has effected a perverse translation of Foucault’s ideas—reinscribing them into the very transcendental logics that Foucault’s methodological experiments sought to overcome” (Curtis, 2014, p. 1755). To Fairclough, discourse is explanatory; to Foucault, discourse is relational, situational, and practiced. Fairclough’s paradigmatic stance has significant tensions with the poststructural foundation of this study because his CDA approach,

…is based upon a realist social ontology which sees both concrete social events and abstract social structures as part of social reality. Social structures can be conceived of as potentialities which are selectively actualized in social events—what is possible, in contrast with what is actual. (Fairclough, 2013, p. 134)

James Gee. Gee’s (2011) approach describes how language works and how language-in-use is always connected with social practices that have “implications for inherently political
things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power” (Gee, 2011, p. 23).

Language-in-use then is always political; thus, all discourse analysis is critical. Language is always used “in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing” (Gee, 2005, p. 10). Therefore, it is a continual process of building understandings and meanings. Within this method “language-in-use is about saying-doing-being and gains its meaning from the ‘game’ or practice it is part of and enacts” (Gee, 2011, p. 11). Discourse is more than linguistic, it “organizes a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). Language-in-use shapes and is shaped by the social practices interlaced within this relationship.

Language has meaning only in and through social practices. Gee explains that discourses involve: “a) situated identities; b) ways of performing and recognizing characteristic identities and activities; c) ways of coordinating and getting coordinated by other people, things, tools, technologies, symbol systems, places, and times; d) characteristic ways of acting-interacting-feeling-emoting-valuing-gesturing-posturing-dressing- thinking-believing-knowing-speaking” (Gee, 2011, p. 40). Discourse, as used by Gee, interconnects with Foucault’s (1972) power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power to explore the construction and maintenance of the understandings of inclusion within a district leadership team.

“Power consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies” (Foucault & Blasius, 1993, p. 204). Power is produced through interactions and relationships. An exploration of the discursive formation of these power relations specifically power/knowledge and disciplinary power at the district level may illuminate the complexity of how discourses of inclusion are produced and, subsequently, how procedures and
practices are institutionalized. Gee’s discourse analysis approach combined with the intellectual tradition of Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power may illuminate the complexity of the multidimensional dynamics surrounding an ESE district team’s participation within the discursive formation of inclusion. The power relations negotiated within these discourses shape the decisions that influence policies, procedures, and practices of inclusive education and provide a nuanced understanding of the role of power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power within this formation. How a district leadership team participate within these discourses is instrumental to understanding how the discourses of inclusion are constructed, practices are normalized, and power relations are legitimized.

**Research Design**

This study explores the following research questions:

1. What are the discourses of inclusion for children with disabilities within a particular school district?
   
   a. How do these discourses shape policies, procedures, and practices?
   
   b. What are the tensions and convergences among and within these discourses?

2. In what ways do the discourses of inclusion legitimize power relations within the discursive formation of inclusive education of a district ESE leadership team?

**Inclusive Policy Context of the State**

This study was conducted in one school district within the state of Florida. This state has a diverse population of students and five of the twenty largest school districts in the nation (Aud, Fox, & Kewal Ramani, 2010). Overall in 2012, the state had 2,668,155 students, of which 354,352 were children with disabilities age 3 to 21. This state enacted accountability policies
and procedures mirroring that of federal legislation mandates of Goals 2000, NCLB and Race to the Top (http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/3/urlt/hist_letter.pdf). These policies established accountability measures wherein the majority of children with disabilities are instructed in the general education classroom alongside their peers without disabilities, in order to participate in state wide standardized assessments and/or meet achievement standards.

Furthermore, Florida Statute 1003.57(1)(a)(2) provides the following definition of inclusion:

A school district shall use the term “inclusion” to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student’s needs based on current research.

Districts within this state are required to demonstrate adherence to this definition of inclusion through the completion of the Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment once every three years. The short and long term improvement plans within the ESE policies and procedures of each district are stated and addressed through this evaluative process. The BPIE is completed with a facilitator from the Florida Inclusion Network, “to facilitate the analysis, implementation, and improvement of inclusive educational practices at the district and school team levels” (1003.57(1)(f), F.S.). Moreover, Technical Assistance Papers (TAP) for Least
Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Specially Designed Instruction with regard to Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) were provided to school districts to guide decisions in support of educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The TAP for LRE stipulates the legal requirements and addresses issues about appropriate placement, service delivery, and scheduling for students with disabilities (Florida Dept. of Education, 2016). The TAP for Specially Designed Instruction states that “students with disabilities are to be considered first and foremost as general education students” and delineates the types of instruction and interventions to support all students within an MTSS framework (Florida Dept. of Education, 2014, p. 1). These two TAPs are used by the district selected for this study.

The School District

This school district, onwards from here will be referred to as The District, has approximately 70,000 students where 15% are children with disabilities. The racial/ethnic demographics for student membership are as follows: White 65%, Black 6%, Hispanic 21%, Asian 3%, Two or more races 4% and American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island are both <1%. This data was accessed through the district’s 2015 LEA profile, a document that specifies the performance of a district to state targets on particular data indicators. The data reported is required by the state to be included as part of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). Moreover, the 2015-2016 fact sheet from the district’s website, over 2,500 are ESOL students, and almost 60% of students are on free/reduced meals. There are 89 schools in this district: 13 high schools, 15 middle schools, 47 elementary schools, 3 educational centers, 10 charter schools, and 1 virtual school. The District is divided into 4 regions, each of which is overseen by an assigned area superintendent, who is also a member of the superintendent’s staff.
According to this district’s most recent BPIE, from 2013-2014, 79% of students are educated in the regular class, and 17% are in a separate class placement. Overall the state data indicates 74% and 11% respectively. The District has a higher percentage of students with disabilities educated in the regular class as well as educated in a separate class in comparison to the rest of the state. Not all schools in this district house the variety of specialized programs for children with disabilities. Within this district one such program is known as the Self-Contained Academic (SCA) program. This is a program for children with delays in academic skills that are significant (i.e. two or more grade levels below) based on performance on the Florida Standards. The specific school that has the SCA program is known as the feeder school. If a child in another school within this region requires the type of services provided in an SCA classroom, a data-driven change of placement meeting will determine if that child will be moved to the feeder school.

**The District’s Inclusion Pilot Study.** A district-driven pilot study was initiated at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year to disband one SCA program within one region’s feeder pattern. The schools within the first selected feeder pattern are located in a suburban middle-class area. A total of six elementary schools were selected by the district to participate. Administrators of these schools were notified in February of 2015 of the district’s decision to undertake this pilot study as well as that implementation would occur in August of 2015.

The area superintendent along with the ESE Director met with this group of administrators to discuss the details of this district-initiated study and to address any questions or concerns. After it was determined that the principals of these schools would participate, a district ESE supervisor, was tasked to oversee this pilot study, and assisted the school-based administrators in notifying the parents of the children with disabilities from the self-contained
academic units about this study. Parents then decided if they would return their child(ren) to their neighborhood schools or stay at the current school and receive the appropriate services in an inclusive setting.

In order to provide supports and services, two district resource teachers were assigned to work with the ESE supervisor (whose responsibilities were delegated by the ESE Director). These district resource teachers in conjunction with the ESE supervisor developed materials to disseminate to schools as well as provided professional development trainings to prepare teachers and administrators for the inclusion work associated with this pilot study.

Another feeder pattern was selected for a second pilot study and the four principals were notified in April 2016 for implementation to occur in August of 2016. This selected group of schools are located in impoverished communities and are Title 1 schools. Although, this second pilot did not start while I engaged in data collection for this study, some experiences and information emerged which were interrelated. Some of these are presented in the findings within chapter 4.

**My Dissertation Research Study: Sources of Information**

The leadership roles of ESE Directors within school districts are entangled in the policies, procedures, and politics inherent in educational organizations. One ESE Director was recruited for this study in order to explore the discursive formation of inclusion in depth. This participant was selected using purposeful sampling in order to “inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon the study” and convenience sampling for the purposes of easy accessibility and cost reduction (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The inclusion criteria for selection of the ESE Director are that the participant must be (a) a current ESE Director in a local school
district, (b) in this position for at least 3 years, and (c) engaged in a deliberate emphasis focused on inclusive education (e.g., reform efforts). The exclusion criteria disqualifies any ESE Director who has less than 3 years of experience in this position or has retired or is no longer in this position. All participants were recruited by utilizing professional and/or personal contacts within the district. See Appendix A to review the letter that was developed to send via email to ESE directors in the state if these contacts were unable to provide assistance with recruitment.

Additionally, eleven related personnel who are part of the team focused on inclusive education (i.e. five district personnel and six school based administrators) were interviewed as recommended by the ESE director and/or related district personnel. This selection process followed the snowball sampling technique as described by Lichtman (2013) as “gaining access to informants through contact information from other informants” (p. 192). These related personnel either worked at the district office or were leaders at the school level and participated as part of a team to further the inclusion work in the district through the pilot study. See Appendix E for more information about the participants.

Furthermore, I attended thirteen meetings related to inclusive education from May to June 2016 (that approximates to thirty hours). See Appendix F for information about the meetings. I gained access to these meetings from recommendations from district personnel. Mainly, I accompanied the ESE Supervisor to the various meetings at the district office or at local elementary schools and sat at the meeting table and took notes. Typically I walked out with the district personnel after the meetings at the local schools but after district office meetings I left. Observations of these meetings and subsequent field notes provided fruitful information about the discursive formation of inclusion within this district. My role entailed being a nonparticipant/observer, taking field notes as an outsider of the group (Creswell, 2013). These
field notes were documented in my observational journal. The notes in this journal informed aspects of this research study. For example, these notes at times generated further questions to ask of participants, clarified what a participant said in an interview, and/or supported what is documented in the multimodal forms of communication. Additionally, the field notes in this journal aided in the analysis of the data by providing another representation of which the discourses of inclusion were reported in descriptive and reflective means. See Appendix B to view a sample format that may be used as an observational protocol.

In addition to interviews and observation of meetings, I collected multimodal forms of language and communications (Gee, 2011) used in the district from the participants such as copies of emails, books, professional development materials, etc. related to inclusive education. I also utilized electronic and media communications regarding inclusive education (e.g., youtube videos, websites). These multimodal forms of communication were analyzed. Participants were informed through the consent letter of providing access to these specific types of communications.

Data Collection

This study involves collecting data through interviews that were conducted and recorded with the participants at a location and time of their choosing. All selected participants were interviewed between one to four times. The interviews ranged from forty-one minutes to one hour and forty-six minutes, securing participants permission if the interview would extend longer than an hour. These were semi-structured interviews where I used various approaches applicable to the qualitative interview process. Here are three approaches to interviewing that embedded me, the researcher, in the interviewing process.
First, the feminist perspective on interviewing emphasizes a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee and may establish a greater level of trust than the traditional means of interviewing because it includes “sensitivity, emotionality, and other traits culturally viewed as feminine” (Punch, 2014, p. 148). Second, I utilized the romantic conception of interviewing which recognizes the researcher’s role within the study and the expectation that the researcher expresses interest and viewpoints of the topic during the interview (Roulston, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher must work to “establish rapport and empathic connection with the interviewee” (Roulston, 2010, p. 217). This conception shares some similarity with the feminist perspective. Lastly, using another of Roulston’s conceptions, I conducted postmodern interviews because this type of interviewing shares the researcher’s reflexivity and represents findings that “are always partial, arbitrary, and situated, rather than unitary, final, and holistic” (Roulston, 2010, p. 220). These interviews were co-constructed between the participant and the researcher, so using the postmodern interview stance acknowledged the contextual nature of the interchange during and after the interview process. The combinative utility of these three ways of interviewing hopefully created a safer space where the interviewer/interviewee duo spoke openly and thoughtfully about inclusive education in the context of this district.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, I used a range of questions to engage in conversations with the participants. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe the following types of interview questions: introductory, follow-up, probing/elaborating, direct, and indirect. Janesick (2011) also provides a similar description of interview questions (e.g., big picture questions, follow up questions, comparison/contrast questions). Driven by the participants’ answers to open ended questions to elicit discussion, different types of questions were asked to gain a deeper understanding because “individual in-depth interviewing is a process, not just a
predetermined list of questions (Lichtman, 2013, p. 195). Furthermore, the first interview utilized the same overarching open ended questions with each participant, and participants’ responses informed and guided the type of inquiry and questions for the subsequent interview(s). See Appendix C for the list of initial interview questions.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a place selected by the participant, recorded, and transcribed. These interviews occurred from April to July 2016 at district offices, school-based sites, and over the phone, depending on the participant’s preference. See Appendix G for information on when the participants were interviewed. All of the interviews were audio recorded, and each recording was transcribed using a transcriptionist in order to concentrate the researcher’s time and efforts on the analysis and discussion sections of this study. After conducting the first interview, a preliminary analysis determined if another interview would be required for the purpose of clarification, elaboration, and/or to garner further information. This was the process for any subsequent interviews with all of the participants. Notes were taken during these interviews and recorded in my field notes journal. The interview recordings were stored in a password protected computer. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants’ anonymity.

As stated earlier, I accessed multimodal forms of language and communications (Gee, 2011) used in the district from the participants. Specifically, observations at district level meetings, multimodal forms of language and communications (Gee, 2011) (e.g., emails, professional development materials), electronic and media communications regarding inclusive education (e.g., youtube videos, websites) used in the district were collected and analyzed.
Data Analysis

Data analysis is about making sense of the data. It is a “complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). This process of analyzing data elucidates findings in hopes of answering the research questions. The process of analysis, however, is not confined only to this portion of the research study but instead continually implicates the researcher to check and monitor data in order to identify areas that require follow-up as well as actively question whether the information collected is leading the research (Grbich, 2007), and if it should do so. A poststructural analysis does not seek to find a true meaning but upends what meanings exist and questions how they come to be and remain.

The discourse analysis approach described in Gee (2005/2011a, 2011b) involves the interrogation of how language in context (specific time and place) engages areas of reality. This approach is not a gradual step by step process, instead it provides a set of “thinking devices with which one can investigate certain sorts of questions” (Gee, 2005, p. 9). These thinking devices (in the form of questions) engage the researcher in the process of inquiry into certain types of issues. The tools of inquiry (Gee, 2011) are the thinking devices that ask something of the data, which the researcher uncovers as a result of this asking and interpreting. Because Gee (2005) specifies the theory of language that encapsulates his approach to discourse analysis as “language has meaning only in and through social practices,” (p. 8), these thinking devices may be considered as the tools to engage in thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). In addition to using these thinking devices, I analyzed the data utilizing Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power by “reading-the data-while-thinking-the-theory” or what Jackson & Mazzei (2013) termed plugging in (p. 264). Asking Gee’s (2005/2011)
particular questions (i.e. tools of inquiry) with Foucault’s theory in mind shaped how I read the data. The following subsections explains Gee’s thinking devices that I used in this study.

**Tools of Inquiry.** Whenever someone speaks or writes there are interrelated areas of reality that are constructed and because language is integral to these constructions, questions can be asked regarding the language-in-use. Language is used to build these areas of reality and the tools of inquiry are used to examine them in particular instances. Language-in-use concurrently builds these realities through speaking and writing. There is a question that can be asked related to each tool and language-in-use.

For this study, the following tools of inquiry are used by asking these questions of the data collected (Gee, 2011, p. 199-201).

- **Relationships:** How words are used to build and sustain, or change relationships among the speaker, other people, social groups, cultures, and/or institutions?

- **Politics:** How words are used to build (construct, assume) what count as social goods and to distribute these to or withhold them from listeners or others? How words are used to build a viewpoint on how social goods are or should be distributed in society?

- **Sign systems and knowledge:** How the words used privilege or de-privilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing and believing, or claims to knowledge and belief?

- **Situated meaning tool:** What specific meanings do listeners have to attribute to words and phrases given the context and how the context is construed?

- **Big “D” Discourse tool:** What discourse is this language part of? What kind of person is this speaker or writer seeking to enact or be recognized as? What sorts of actions,
interactions, values, beliefs, objects, tools, technologies, and environments are associated with this sort of language within a particular Discourse?

These tools are used to direct the inquiry with regard to issues specified for the study. Gee (2005/2011) discussed “little d” discourse and “big D” discourse to explain how the tools of inquiry can be used for analyzing a topic or issue at a complex level. He describes “little d” discourse is language-in-use and distinguishes that “big D” discourse includes the “other stuff.” Language is always used “in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing” (Gee, 2005, p. 10). Therefore, it is a continual process of building understandings of language-in-action. Then, the tools of inquiry are used “to study discourse in Discourses” (p. 8).

These tools of inquiry (i.e. thinking devices) are used to analyze the data gathered from interrogation of particular language-in-use. In this study I focused on the previous thinking devices (i.e. tools) to attend to the multiple understandings of inclusion and how these shape policies and practices in the district. Since “politics is part and parcel of using language” (Gee, 2005, p. 2), using this method of analyzing data illuminate how a district leadership team uses language, a component of discourse and negotiates power within and among them. The use of particular thinking devices (Gee, 2005/2011) along with thinking-with-theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) allowed me to engage with the data in ways that would not be available had I used coding or thematic analyses that are more readily used in qualitative research.

Processes of Analysis. The tools of inquiry articulate questions that are asked of the data (Gee, 2005). I read and reread the data to identify instances relevant to this study. The tools of inquiry (i.e., situated meaning and big “D” Discourse) were used to engage thinking and selection of instances. This type of thinking and the subsequent writing helped me to make sense
of the data in a way that I would not have had I focused on mechanizing the process through coding. Writing allowed me to think or as Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) stated, “Thought happened in writing” (p. 970), which they described as writing as a method of inquiry. In this study, writing is the method I chose for data analysis, which is consistent with others doing poststructural work. By selecting this approach, I concur with Richardson and St. Pierre (2005):

I used writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think; that is, I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data…or by analytic induction. I did not limit data analysis to conventional practices of coding data and then sorting it into categories that I then grouped into themes. (p. 970)

Through this process of using writing to think, I re-visited the data iteratively to find those instances of commonalities and tensions and represented them utilizing topic flow or topic chaining. Gee (2011) describes topic flow or topic chaining as “a form of creating cohesion” (p. 147). An outcome is that it provides a way to organize information and present perspectives about a topic. Once these topic flow or topic chain have been determined, examples are represented as stanzas. The organization of this information in stanza form is similar to stanzas in poetry. A stanza “focuses on a specific character, theme, image, topic, or perspective” (Gee, 2011, p. 74). To determine a stanza, I grouped idea units into a topic and at times focused on how stanzas may cluster together “to form larger units of sense” (p. 80). These larger blocks of information (a clustering of stanzas) are significant to data analysis and representation. The determination of the make-up of the stanza(s) is solely configured by me, the researcher based upon how I read the data and used writing as a method of inquiry to represent an idea unit.
Here is an example of a stanza used to illustrate that teachers were concerned when a research professor received permission from the curriculum coordinator of a school and not the teachers to work with the children in their classrooms (Gee, 2005).

Teachers not curriculum coordinators need to be asked

Well I think

one thing you need to recognize

about the structure of the New Derby schools

is that if Joanne, Linda, Karen, and I

or any combination thereof

are involving our classrooms

we are the people who need to be asked

and to be plugged into it (p. 168-169).

Gee (2005) explains that the word “structure” in describing the school in this context indicates an informal hierarchy that includes teachers and curriculum coordinators, instead of an official hierarchical bureaucracy. This was a simplified demonstration of the situated meaning tool. The specific meaning a word “will take on in the talk and practices of the group is up for negotiation and contestation” (Gee, 2005, p. 174). One of the building tools, politics, can also be used in this stanza when language is used to distribute a social good (i.e., who has control and decision making responsibilities). For the sake of understanding how to use the building tools of inquiry, this stanza was used as a sole example; however, when utilizing transcriptions, multiple stanzas (clusters) may be used concomitantly to illustrate particular instances. Reporting of findings
may show evidence of multiple truths of inclusion and could be represented in competing discourses. Not only are similarities or convergences among the discourses reported but also the tensions and contradictions that are apparent.

Validity

Validity or trustworthiness of qualitative work is a longstanding issue in education research (Cho & Trent, 2006; Kvale, 1995; Lichtman, 2013). The question of the credibility or quality of qualitative research has been re-conceptualized to address differing perspectives within this type of research (Eisner, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Lather, 1993; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). For instance, terms such as validity, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, verisimilitude, relevance, and confirmability (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, & Roulston, 2007) are used in qualitative work. The variability of the terminology is demonstrative of the multiple interpretations of how to ‘evaluate’ this type of research. To align with this poststructural study, the term validity is used instead of trustworthiness or any other descriptor, as a countermeasure to its authoritative position in the legitimation of knowledge from its postpositivist conception. Lather (1993) explained, “…rather than jettisoning ‘validity’ as the term of choice, I retain the term in order to both circulate and break with the signs that code it… all of the baggage that it carries plus…what it means to rupture validity as a regime of truth” (p. 674). Validity in its traditional usage relates to the credibility of knowledge generated through research that is determined through a technical process. Lather’s reconceptualization of validity problematizes its conventional meaning and explores through language new ways of validating knowledge claims.

Lather declares that, “…validity is far more about deep theoretical and political issues than about a technical issue or an issue of allegiance to correct procedure,” (as cited in Koro-
Ljungberg, 2010, p. 606). The crux of this study is grounded in the socio-political and historical interrelation of how the discourses of inclusion have been maintained, so a focus on validity as a technical process is not used, but rather one that explores the complexities of the issue. This study unearths the complicatedness of the multiplicities of understandings of inclusion. The validity question is unavoidable and unresolvable from this stance since “no method can deliver on ultimate truth” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 120).

**Not Triangulation.** Triangulation is typically used in qualitative research to measure the ‘accuracy’ of the data and to establish soundness of the findings of a study. Creswell (2013) explains the process “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p, 251). Triangulating these different sources then positions the qualitative researcher away from the process of establishing the criterion for which validity is measured. Triangulation is a validation of findings and a representation of one ultimate truth. Instead of using triangulation to determine validity in this study, I plan on taking a divergent route, one that lays bare the possibilities of the researcher to define and enact validity and address ethics within this process.

Koro-Ljungberg (2010) states, “I call for the return of ethics in the context of validity. I worry that externalized notions and conceptualizations of validity promote simplistic and reductionist views on knowledge and data” (p. 604). This study undertakes a journey into the understandings of inclusive education and how district personnel participate in the formations of these understandings and shape related policies, procedures, and processes. Fundamentally, inclusive education raises ethical questions and illuminates concerns regarding the schooling of children with disabilities. I agree with Koro-Ljungberg’s call for ethics when considering validity in research and therefore utilizes Richardson’s notion of crystallization (2005) as the
means to ascertain validity in this study along with Ellingson’s (2009) explication of crystallization because it embraces situational knowledge, partiality of perspectives, and multiple truths.

**Utility of Crystallization.** Richardson’s measure of validity takes on the image of a crystal. Instead of the adherence to a two dimensional static triangle that contains a fixed point of reference to be triangulated, she proposes a three dimensional crystal as the measure of validity. The crystal is used because it

…combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shape, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose---not triangulation but rather crystallization. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963)

Validity through crystallization is inherently linked to the complexity and richness of the data analysis which is grounded in the sociopolitical and historical discourses of inclusion. Further, analysis of the data may lead to theory development or reconstruction.

This study utilizes discourse as the modality to explore the multiplicity of understandings of inclusion with a district leadership team. The participants’ perspectives of inclusion may be shaped by personal beliefs, sociopolitical contexts, and cultural and historical aspects, which provides a nuanced view of how inclusion is understood. Therefore, there may be more than one “truth” that may surface as a result of the variability of participants’ perspectives which is in contrast to utilizing triangulation where only one “truth” is ascertained and reported objectively.
Richardson explained that “crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (as cited in Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 122). The participant’s lens as shared through interviews, reflect an angular and refractive positioning specific to that person’s understanding. That means there could possibly be multiple understandings of inclusion, although there may be some similar patterns in addition to inconsistencies and contradictions. Important to note is the role as the researcher in development, conduct, and analysis in this study which also involve my views of inclusion and how these views shape the research. More on the researcher’s role in this study is provided in a later section within this chapter.

**Ellingson’s Crystallization.** Ellingson (2009) proposed principles of crystallization that expound upon Richardson’s description. Crystallization appears in qualitative work that includes the following features:

- Produce knowledge through complex interpretation and in-depth understanding of a topic (p. 11).
- Crystallization requires engaging in at least two of these strategies: constructing themes or patterns, searching for evocative moments to capture, and identifying invocations of power in discourse (p. 12).
- Using more than one genre of writing such as incorporating poetic representations (p. 13).
- Researcher reflexivity is open about the research process to establish integrity and awareness (p. 13).
- Demonstrates that knowledge is situated, partial, constructed, multiple, and embodied and entangled in power relations. Truth is not definitively singular or absolute (p. 14).
Crystallization as described here, seems fitting to explore these multiple meanings of inclusion discursively. Crystallization constructs a “partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 6). Since meanings are socially constructed and there is not a single truth that exists, using the five features of crystallization to determine validity addresses the complex nature of how understandings of inclusion are implicated within a discursive formation. The features of crystallization are evidenced in the analysis and established in the discussion chapter.

**Ethics**

Creswell (2013) explains the ethical issues to consider during the entire research process and how to address these issues. This process begins prior to conducting the study, at the onset of the study, collecting, analyzing, and reporting data and in publishing the study. In this study, participants are informed from the beginning via the informed consent that explains the research study, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. See Appendix D to review the informed consent. It also describes the steps the researcher took to ensure confidentiality such as using pseudonyms and the storage of the data collection materials. Statements are included which address that the participant’s participation is voluntary and can end at any time without any consequences. The researcher also answered any questions prior to and during the research study process. This study was approved by the IRB. See Appendix H for the approval letter from the IRB.

To address ethical issues the following procedures are used:
• Pseudonyms are used for all participants, the district, and schools. Any identifying information about participants are disguised in public. Transcriptions have consent forms attached.

• Data are stored on a password protected computer. Consent forms are locked in a cabinet.

• None of the participants withdrew from this study. If a participant would have withdrawn, the data collected with that participant during the interview process would have been destroyed.

• Data will be stored for eight years after the final dissertation is submitted. After eight years all electronic data will be permanently deleted or shredded.

Furthermore, here is a potential risk to the participants:

• There is a possibility that a participant may experience some emotional discomfort or feel uncomfortable during the interview process when sharing thoughts and experiences about inclusion of children with disabilities.

To address these potential risks, the researcher asked the participant if he/she will prefer to stop the interview and continue at another time as well as explain that he/she may suspend their participation or elect to withdraw at any time during the research study.

**Role of the Researcher**

This study is an exploration of the discourses of inclusion in one school district in Florida. As a former special educator in this state, I have actively participated in the inclusion discourses at the school and classroom level. My decisions and subsequent actions have shaped the educational experiences of children with and without disabilities within this discursive formation. These experiences shape my perspectives and beliefs about inclusive education.
which is integral to my role as a researcher. I should be forthcoming with this information because my subjectivity is ingrained in this research process. Alan Peshkin (1988) concisely stated, “…one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and nonresearch aspects of our life” (p. 17). I agree. However when he discussed “taming my subjectivity” (p. 20), I am inclined to disagree. In this study, I did not shy away from sharing my experiences as a special educator because they are intimately related to my views about educating children with disabilities and the primary reason for which I am pursuing this line of research inquiry. Furthermore, my role as a researcher is fundamental to all aspects of the research process from determining the questions to ask to the analysis of the findings.

The researcher is the research instrument (Janesick, 2011). The influence of the social, cultural, political, and historical fields on meaning making is critical to understanding the embedded and interwoven contextual factors that affect an individual or groups’ view of reality. As a researcher I subjectively conduct, interpret, and analyze research viewed through a tinted lens, colored by my beliefs, perspectives, and experiences. Lichtman (2013) states, “The researcher is the conduit through which information is gathered and filtered. It is imperative, then, that the researcher has experience and understanding about the problem, the issues, and the procedures” (p. 25). My experiences as a special education teacher shape my perspectives about this research inquiry.

**Reflexive Journal.** Throughout the research process I kept a researcher reflective journal. Janesick (2011) describes journal writing as a “heuristic tool and research technique” (p. 156). The researcher journal is my recording of descriptions, issues, explanations, and depictions of happenings throughout the research process. It also became my place to be
reflexive and to contemplate upon my role and subjectivity and how I shape and am shaped by the research. Furthermore, I engage in what Pillow (2003) refers to as “uncomfortable reflexivity - a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous” (p. 188). She “calls for a positioning of reflexivity not as clarity, honesty, or humility, but as practices of confounding disruptions” (p. 192). The simple retelling of stories or anecdotal instances may be critiqued or challenged or become messy as part of this process. It becomes not-so-simple. The acknowledgement of this uneasiness allows for the researcher to struggle reflexively and note these struggles in this journal.

Throughout the data collection process, my reflexive journal became a space for me to immediately record my thoughts after an interview or an observation. In addition it became a contemplative space to engage with what I heard, saw, experienced through my interactions with participants and grapple with my own beliefs and conceptualizations. Utilizing Gee’s (2011) thinking devices and Jackson and Mazzei’s (2013) reading-the-data-while-thinking-with-theory, I thought my way through an understanding of the data, as I collected the data, and wrote about it in this journal. This is how my reflexive journal informed the analysis of this study. Moreover, this type of writing further opened up avenues for me to explore with the data, as I continued with what Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) referred to as writing as a method of inquiry for chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this research study relates to the participant selection process. Since the district chosen is from the state of Florida, the information garnered and analysis conducted are contextually based within the socio-political, cultural, and historical traditions of this state and further within the nuanced traditions of the specific district. Another limitation is the time
allocated to spend within the district to gather the data. Due to researcher constraints no more than a semester was used to collect data which may influence the data analysis section of this research study. My exploration of the dynamics of the discourses of inclusion and the relations of power within the discursive formation among the district level team could be restricted due to this limited time frame.

Conclusion

I discussed in this chapter how utilizing a discourse analysis that is critical-oriented and grounded in Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power, allows me to interrogate how the discursive formation of inclusion shape the policies, procedures, and practices within a school district. Further, I explained the research design of this study. In the following chapter, I present the findings of this study.
Chapter 4
Discursive Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the discursive formation of an ESE leadership team to understand how the discourses of inclusion are constructed, practices are normalized, and power relations are legitimized. This exploration entailed a collection of data from multiple sources. I conducted nineteen interviews with twelve participants, observed thirteen meetings at the district office or local schools, collected multimodal forms of communication (e.g., youtube and wiki link, emails, professional development materials, technical assistance papers, etc.), and maintained an observational journal and a researcher reflexive journal. These sources of data were collected from April 2016 to July 2016.

Subsequently, the data sources were analyzed utilizing a critically-oriented discourse analysis undergirded by Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge and disciplinary power. In this type of analysis, “…there’s no recipe, no textbook that explains, step-by-step, how to ‘do’ a Foucaultian power-knowledge reading,” (St. Pierre, 2014, p. 10). In this study, I used Gee’s (2005/2011) thinking devices (i.e., the tools of inquiry, which are questions to ask of the data), along with a similar approach that Jackson and Mazzei (2013) describe as, “reading-the-data-while-thinking-theory” (p. 264). A set of findings was produced as a result of asking these particular types of questions while engaging in theory-infused thinking.
This chapter reports the findings of this type of analysis. The discourses of inclusion of an ESE district leadership team are described. These discourses are used to illuminate how they shape the policies, procedures, and practices of this district. An explication of how the discourses of inclusion legitimize power relations within the discursive formation of inclusion of this district leadership team is integrated. Areas of commonalities, tensions and contradictions are provided. Specific instances from participants’ interviews illustrative of these areas are represented in the stanza-like formation known as topic chaining (Gee, 2011).

**Discourses of Inclusion**

Through multiple readings of the data, and writing to think (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) four governing discourses were dominant. These four discourses had recurring instances of tensions and commonalities which made them central to the findings and discussion. These discourses are labeled and presented in distinctive subsections for organizational purposes, but they are not exclusive of each other. These discourses are: the philosophical understandings of inclusion discourse, the contextual discourse, the politics of leading discourse, and the logistics of inclusive schooling discourse.

**The Philosophical Understandings of Inclusion Discourse**

This discourse addresses the deeper meanings of inclusion. These are the foundational beliefs from the combinative standpoint of a person, groups of people, or the institution (i.e., the district) about inclusion, specifically related to the district-driven pilot study. Three interrelated aspects from the data representative of this discourse are: the compelling why, a mindset shift, and labeling.
The Compelling Why. In this district, the compelling why was used to establish the purpose of the pilot study. All participating school administrators and their staff were provided with an explanation of what it was and why it was important. Here is a principal in the pilot study explaining it:

The compelling why.

I think was, why do we want to have this pilot?

Well, the why goes back to what research shows

the longer we keep a child in a self-contained classroom,

the larger their gap grows,

their learning and doing gap.

We're not closing that gap and getting them closer to grade level standards.

The longer we keep them in self-contained we're actually hurting them,

and that's what research showed.

This school-based administrator explains that the main reason to do inclusion is to address the achievement gap between students who are in the self-contained setting versus the regular education setting. This is also substantiated by other participants along with the Compelling Why Power Point presentation that is used to explain the rationale for participants in the pilot inclusion study. Additionally, these students are being hurt in the process of being segregated. Here is an excerpt from the ESE Director sharing the focus of the compelling why:

We want all students to achieve.
The ultimate goal obviously is a standard diploma and
to be able to be prepared for whatever path you want to take.

There's so many things that students can do. It's not just college bound.

You can go to some of our (vocational schools) and leave with certifications

It's really around the kids and their unique needs and building their capacity

and helping them to be successful in their future.

Knowing and keeping students in a segregated environment isn't what real life is,

and how we build our capacity to be successful in the future.

The ESE Director indicates that preparation for life is a component of why inclusion of
students with disabilities in the regular education setting is better than being in a self-contained
academic class. Attaining a standard diploma, earning certifications at vocational schools, or
being college bound are important to being successful and living in “real life.” She also
explained later in this chapter, that students in SCAs are of particular categorizations and the
reason for disbanding for the purposes of the inclusion pilot study was to address the
achievement gap. This is the reason that has been shared by other participants as well. In a
follow up interview, the ESE Director continues with a further explanation of the compelling
why for disbanding the self-contained unit:

You know, the messaging of that---

the philosophy.

I will tell you when I have this conversation;
some people are like, Oh, you're going to be a full inclusion district.

That's not what we're talking about.

We’re really looking at the needs of the kiddos.

And in the continuum of services of students with disabilities,

there are much more mildly disabled than you would think of,

than an EBD student or a student with autism.

It's definitely the philosophy of the district

that we know most kids should be out in Gen. Ed.

The ESE Director explains that the continuum of services model is what drives this district’s decisions about which students to include in the regular classroom and which to include in a segregated setting. It is about “the needs of the kiddos.” There is also a distinction made between the severity of the students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD) or who are on the Autism Spectrum and those who are “more mildly disabled.” The majority of children should be in the regular education classroom. An understanding of disability that is based on an assumptive grounding that severity of ability (i.e., cognitive, academic, social, emotional) drives decisions of inclusion in the regular classroom categorizes students on an ableist continuum. This shapes who the pilot study focuses upon and the procedures used for those students to be included in the regular classroom.

Further, in the District-created Compelling Why power point presentation that is used with administrators and staff, information is presented specific to the percentage of time students with disabilities are included in the regular class versus separate class overall for the state and the
district over a four year period. Then the pilot study schools data are presented for a percentage of time in the regular, resource, and separate classes. The emphasis is that the percentages are higher in the regular class and that this is commensurate with or exceeding the state. However, the district’s percentages are much higher in the separate class when compared to the resource class percentages which are almost nonexistent or single-digit. A table with this information is presented in a later subsection of this chapter. Moreover, statewide assessment data for the most recent school year is shared with a focus on achievement for students in the regular, self-contained, and not self-contained classrooms. These slides show that when students with disabilities are included in the general class they will achieve more than those in the self-contained setting.

Interestingly, this district’s most recent Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) results, which come from a district-level self-assessment instrument required by the state to address concerns regarding inclusion of children with disabilities, identified that the “data raises concerns for students with more significant disabilities served in more segregated settings.” This statement is reflective of Indicator 20 which focuses on students with low-incidence disabilities and those who are on access points being educated in the general classroom. This also relates to Indicator 12 which addresses whether the students with disabilities (SWD) are mostly educated in the general classroom. Specifically, here in Table 1, are the two indicators and the district’s implementation status for each from the December 2014 BPIE reporting, the most recent.
Table 1

2014 BPIE Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Implementation: Not Yet</th>
<th>Implementation: Partially</th>
<th>Implementation: Fully</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. District data reflect that SWDs receive most, if not all, of their education and related services in age- and grade-appropriate general education classes, regardless of the type or severity of their disability.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. District has data that reflect an increasing number of students with low-incidence disabilities and/or receiving instruction through the access points are educated in general education classes, with supplementary aids, services, and curricular modifications as stipulated in student IEPs.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is demonstrated here is that the District does not implement any policies, procedures, or practices with regard to increasing the number of children with low incidence disabilities in the regular education classes. Also, this table shows that there is partial implementation of services for children with disabilities, without focusing on severity of the disability. Indicator 20 informs Indicator 12. In this subsection, the Compelling Why is discussed according to the District’s reasoning for disbanding one self-contained academic unit within one feeder pattern as part of the inclusion pilot study.

**A Mindset Shift.** The shift in thinking about students with disabilities and inclusion was discussed by the participants. Since this district is moving into its second year with the first group in the pilot study, and now starting with a new group of schools, this talk of shifting beliefs is embedded in the discourse. Here is the ESE supervisor sharing what this shift looks like for her:
I think we have a skewed version of what we think to be inclusive practices.

I think that's everywhere,

but I see it here because I work here.

We think that if we're including,

let's just say we had a school that were including EBD kids and including ASD kids

and including our SLD and LI kids,

I have schools right now that do have those populations of kids in Basic (Education)

but that's because the principal has that mindset which has said,

Okay, these kids can stay as much as possible.

But these kids can stay only when it suits the needs for them to stay.

My EBD friend can stay in basic (education) as long as he behaves

to a certain extent.

But then when he gets to this other extent, now he can't be included.

And access level kids, not at all.

If I have an InD baby, I just can't support that kid, right?

So he has to go somewhere else.

That's considered to be okay,

because I am inclusive because I am including all disabilities
but that kid has a different need so I need to send him here.

We don't include those kids in our understanding

of what we consider to be inclusive practices,

even though when I talk the talk, that's what I'm talking about.

This supervisor does not always see the shift in beliefs about educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom to be commensurate with her vision. For some students with disabilities, particularly those with the EBD, ASD, and Intellectual Disabilities (InD) labels, being included in the regular classroom has restrictions. They are only allowed as long as they can fit academically or socially or behaviorally within the classroom; once their needs supersede a certain extent then that child “has to go somewhere else.” Also, mentioned are those students who are “access level” and not included “at all,” which usually are the children with moderate or severe disabilities. The fit of students with particular disability categorizations in the regular classroom is a disciplined understanding that addresses why these students may not be suitable to be included. When professionals are disciplined in this way, they are also implicit in the disciplining of others as these understandings are perpetuated. Read this excerpt from one of the district resource teachers:

(The direction is that)

we no longer have self-contained academic classrooms

for students who do not have behavioral problems.

Obviously, you need to have a continuum of services,

absolutely at every school and throughout the district
but the idea needs to be or the mindset needs to be (that)

we need to try everything we can in basic (education) first,

really have the documentation to show that your interventions did or did not work

and not just place a kid in a self-contained academic (class)

because they are two years behind.

Even if they are two years behind academically, what do we need to do?

And to stop looking at labels, because they look at labels here.

Although this district resource teacher believes a continuum of services is a requirement, the mindset shift must occur in the regular classroom setting. The interventions must be in place in the regular class to support students who are two years behind academically (not including the ones with “behavioral problems”), without a focus on the labels attached to these students. Yet, there is an implicit understanding of a label that is attached if the focus is only on those who are academically behind. Additionally, she does believe that a continuum of services must exist—which also entails focusing on the labels or severity of disability at times. This district personnel worked in another school district in Florida for over twenty years, the last ten of which she was a district inclusion specialist to assist schools with inclusion. She has been disciplined in this way, and she disciplines others of the necessity for a continuum of services which shape the understanding that there is a need for the resource classroom setting—that will be discussed later on in this chapter. The other district resource teacher shared,

I think that there are some mindsets

that believe that a struggling child doesn't belong in a basic class.
If they're struggling that much,

then they should be in a classroom all to themselves

because they think we as ESE teachers have a magic wand

and we can just tap it and boom,

they’re cured

and we can make it happen.

That's not the case.

There are some people who do not feel that the “struggling child” should be in the regular classroom. That the ESE teacher has a “magic wand” or some type of power to cure these children, is a part of this shift in thinking they are trying to dispel. That struggling students, with particular emphasis on children with disabilities, need a separate classroom so they the can work toward being cured implies that special education teachers have specialized knowledge or skills. The students should then be with those who house this specialized knowledge which maintains the understanding that some are included in the regular education classroom and others are not. This understanding shapes the practices of inclusion in this district.

At the beginning of the pilot study, the ESE supervisor gave a copy of a book to the district personnel involved along with the building administrators. This book is titled, *Widening the Circle*, by Mara Sapon-Shevin. The supervisor used this book to show the type of thinking, the shift needed in order for this pilot study to work. At the beginning of trainings, she read quotes from it as a motivational and informational tool. What is interesting about this book, is
the stance the author takes on inclusion. Here is Sapon-Shevin’s description of inclusion or inclusive education:

A core value and set of practices that support the belief that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths, weaknesses, or labels---should be full members of the general education school community, with their individual needs met within that general education context. (p. xii)

This quote demonstrates that Sapon-Shevin’s inclusive view is of a full inclusion model, one where all children are taught in the regular education classroom where all needs are addressed in that context. There is no need for a continuum of services. In the book she describes the types of supports (i.e. fiscal, personnel, professional development) that are needed for this model to be successful so long as these supports are consistently in place. Earlier in this chapter, the ESE Director articulated that a full inclusion model is not the direction taken by this district. There are particular children with disabilities that would require a more restrictive placement, which is why there is a necessity for a continuum of services. This is incongruent with this informational text that the ESE Supervisor uses to engage participants in trainings. Here the area superintendent for the first pilot schools explains:

So (the ESE Supervisor) had given me a book to read.

Basically it’s the inclusion research,

The research on inclusion is that idea that

when students are around their same age peers

and they’re exposed to the regular curriculum
and we find a way to adapt that---

whether we’re adapting the teacher, the instruction, or we’re adapting the materials---
you’re helping that child access what is grade level standards
to the degree they can with support.

That over time is what moves that child to the highest possible level of achievement.

This same participant said with regard to particular children with disabilities, “If you have severe developmental delays in your mental, intellectual ability, you’re probably going to need self-contained.” This area superintendent seems to imply a need to have a continuum of services model by stating some children with “severe developmental delays” may require a self-contained classroom. However, the area superintendent has stated that the research provided in this book favors students being in the regular curriculum and that making adaptations suitable to each child’s needs will lead to higher achievement. Sapon-Shevin also clearly states that her view of inclusive education is full inclusion. There is some skewing of interpretation or perhaps misinterpretation involved here.

The differences of ability undergirds the district’s approach to inclusive education. In this subsection, the mindset shift needed to move students out of the SCA classrooms and into the regular education classroom became problematic for some participants. For some the mindset shift focused on children with particular disability categorizations (SLD and LI) but not others (ED, ASD, InD), as shared by participants. 

**Labeling.** The labels, which are the categories of disability, seem to drive the placement of many children with disabilities, although some in the district do not believe this should
happen. A focus on labels may stigmatize particular children and/or placements within the continuum of services. The ESE Director shares her view:

All children have access.

And that doesn’t mean for me a hundred percent of every kid every day, but finding those opportunities.

So, I do have personal beliefs like those self-contained academic language impaired and learning disabled kids need to be in Gen. Ed.

The students pursuing access points, at what we used to call the independent level I think can spend a large portion of time out in Gen. Ed.

Are they ready for those kids?

Absolutely not!

But that's where I'd love to see us (the district) go.

And those students, some do have autism,
some have behavioral concerns,
that's kind of where you personalize it for those kids about what can they handle.
You have to differentiate
that as well for students with emotional behavioral disabilities
based on the severity of that.

Many can be out in Gen. Ed. without question – most –
but there are some that really struggle
with some internalizing and externalizing behaviors
that need specific therapeutic support.

Students with autism again,
many of them have very specific strengths.
And so, you capitalize on those strengths
but there are some areas that are huge deficits
in many adaptive behavior areas and other things.
Where do you remediate and provide that support in a safe environment for the kiddos?
That's truly my belief.

I think all kids could have some form of access
even if it's not even for academics,
if it's for electives, if it's for lunch time,
if it's for after school opportunities, peer supports, those types of things.

The ESE Director articulates that all children would benefit from access to the regular classroom, but some could not remain for the entire time. The “language impaired” and “learning disabled” children should be in this environment; the independent level access points children can be there for most of the time (though the regular education teachers would not be prepared to teach them); the struggling EBD children and those on the Autism Spectrum may have intense needs that require a “safe environment” in another classroom. Though certain labels and severity of disability influence decisions about whether a child can be taught in a regular education classroom, the ESE Director believes all students can have some type of access even it’s for lunch or electives. This is reminiscent of the old school model where children would gain access only when they can “handle” it, when being in the regular classroom was about the child fitting in to that classroom environment. Keeping children safe and making sure they receive the services and instruction that they need may not happen in the regular class which is why a continuum is necessitated. One of the principals in the pilot study explained her alternative viewpoint:

Why do we need to label them Special Education?

So we (need) to change that mindset to growth.

As long as there is growth, you're doing the right thing.

Look at the data.

That doesn't mean they should have a label of special education.
It just means they need something in addition to,

it's not to supplant the curriculum

It's to support it.

We're all one and when we are all treated as one

then we celebrate our differences,

and we tolerate our differences,

and we find ways to enhance learning regardless of the difference.

I think the more we label and the more we segregate,

we're telling children, little children

that they're not as good as somebody else.

I would like to think we're including all.

In elementary, I think you need to have an inclusive environment

even for kids with cognitive disabilities.

I'll tell you a story.
My son, he's 30 years old now,

but when he was in kindergarten

he came home every day

and talked about Julia, Julia, Julia, Julia.

Her favorite color is this, her favorite color is that.

And then a few years later,

Julia was sent to my school where I taught

And Julia was in a wheelchair and was profoundly handicapped

and used a storyboard to talk.

Now, did my son say that? No.

All I knew is that she was a nice little kindergarten girl

that loved yellow and my son liked her.

So ideally, would we like that for all kids? Yes.

Elementary's a good place to do that

because it really is a time where you're teaching tolerance or diversity
and you’re teaching acceptance

and you’re teaching differences are good.

It prepares them for the real world.

I do understand that inclusion can’t happen

as students sometimes get older.

And then teachers aren’t trained

with profound or the behavioral disorders or some of the severe issues.

As long as there's supports in place for those in all schools,

I think we could do it in the ideal world.

This principal shares a belief that children, regardless of cognitive abilities, should be included in elementary schools (which may have been shaped by her son’s experience with Julia). Labeled children get a message that they are “not good” like others, so schools should focus on growth and meeting all students’ needs. Segregating hurts children. But, this thinking is limited only to the elementary school context, as the principal explains that inclusion at the secondary level would be difficult because teachers are not “trained” to work with specific types children with severe disabilities. The professionalized knowledge that special educators have about working with children with profound or behavioral disorders is warranted, especially with older children. Although, in her ideal world, all children would receive supports in the regular classroom. Tension is apparent with this principal whose beliefs about inclusion may not be in alignment with the district. She does, however, continue to maintain in her school the type of
inclusion that aligns with the district. She is disciplined by the district’s view and disciplines others, in the context of her school, to do the same.

The Philosophical Understanding of Inclusion Discourse section explicated the tensions and contradictions through the Compelling Why, the Mindset Shift, and Labeling subsections. These subsections problematize the rationale for doing this District-driven inclusion pilot study.

**The Contextual Discourse**

The contextual discourse is about the localized and the nuanced variabilities of this district that shape viewpoints and actions related to inclusion and inclusive education. According to the ESE Director, this district is viewed by the state as being “progressive” in terms of LRE data, which tell the percentage of time children with disabilities spend in the regular education classroom. This district’s percentage is 79% according to recent BPIE data. The contextual specificities of this district are significant in understanding how inclusion efforts are constructed for children with disabilities. There are a couple of interconnecting areas shared in this section: Pendulum Swing and Responsibility for Educating Children with Disabilities.

**Pendulum Swing.** The district in the 1990s decided to focus on inclusion to address the achievement gap prevalent with children with disabilities. One of the district resource teachers, who has worked in this county for 32 years, was one of the first inclusion trainers for the district. In her comparison of inclusion efforts then and now she stated that, “I think that the philosophy is still the same and that the outcome is student growth. (What’s) different. It’s more stressful now because of the expectations put on both ESE and Basic (Education) teachers.” Teachers have to meet standards and curricular demands ingrained in a system of accountability. This pressure had shifted the district’s inclusive efforts that were initiated in the 1990s. The shaping
of the policies and procedures during this time happened as a result of the achievement gap, now it’s a bit of the same but added is the pressure of the accountability movement. This is the ESE Director’s account of past efforts relative to efforts now:

If you go back in time

probably 8 to 10 years ago

we had little self-contained classes at every Elementary School

and we were like No, no we're not doing this anymore.

So we went through a similar process of inclusion
to really look at the needs of our district.

We looked at our data and saw the achievement gaps
between students in self-contained and students in Gen Ed,
and the barriers that the self-contained teachers were experiencing
with trying to teach the curriculum across students that were significantly delayed
and across multiple grade levels.

8 to 10 years ago we did this already.

(We) went through and really tried to reallocate resources to support Gen Ed
and not have students in the segregated setting.

The pendulum goes left, the pendulum goes right.
Slowly there's a new crop of kids
these more medically complex,
severely language impaired, multiple disabled kiddos
that really struggled in Gen Ed.

Teachers weren't equipped for those types of kids.

So it wasn't just the traditional SLD kid with the math deficit (or)
the language impaired kid.

So these (segregated) programs started creeping up again.

More clustered around.

Again, when you look at LRE data,
you can see that we weren’t shifting kids.

We weren't really finding out what works for those kids.

(It’s) again the achievement gap
it’s kind of the same conversation,
just deja vu 8 years later---

that these students are continuing to struggle and not make the gains.

The district had taken deliberate efforts to implement inclusive practices in the 1990s;
however, due to a “new crop of kids” the pendulum swung. Since the needs of the students with
disabilities were more complex and teachers were unequipped to teach them in the regular
classroom, clusters of segregated programs appeared. The severity or complexity of the
disability shaped decisions about whether children would be educated in the regular classroom as
well as conditioned an understanding that someone with specialized skills is required to teach
these children in another classroom. As a result, procedures and practices were then developed
so particular children would be in self-contained classrooms. There is a resurgence now of
inclusion efforts for the same purpose as before, to address the achievement gap. The students
with disabilities need to be in the regular education classroom because the Self Contained
Academic classrooms are detrimental to their achievement. Déjà vu indeed. The ESE
Supervisor explained further about this pendulum:

We keep having this pendulum in our county.

10 years back, we used to have VE classrooms (Varying Exceptionalities)

where any disability could be in that program.

We realized, oh that doesn't work.

So instead of trying to find middle ground

and instead of trying to really talk about inclusive practices,

we were like, okay, let's just throw everybody out in Basic (education).

So we swung to that other side of the pendulum.

Then we realized, oh we can't support all of these kids in Basic (education).

No kidding!
Then we swung back to having self-contained academic (classrooms).

We started making selections about what kid needed to go in 
this self-contained academic (classroom).

Now for a while that sustained people, 
but then the standards changed and the kids started looking different. 
It's like, back to VE again. 
Now, we've got all these exceptionalities in here. 
Now, all these different kids are in here.

What I keep trying to tell people is stop having the pendulum swing. 
If you move to the middle which is resource, 
then I have the continuum in my own building, 
but I provide as much basic education as the child can maintain. 
So now I get best of both worlds and 
I'm better able to support kids via the standards 
rather than having three different grade levels in one classroom. 

The ESE Supervisor discusses the similarities between the varied exceptionalities (VE) 
classroom of yesteryear and the self-contained academic (SCA) classrooms that are currently in place. These two types of classrooms contain a mixture of children with differing specialized
needs. Since there are too many students in these classrooms with involved complexity there is a need to have a resource setting, in order to complete the continuum of services. Adding this part of the continuum would satisfy a missing service delivery option in this district. The district’s understanding seems to be that with inclusion there is continuum of services in place. This understanding constructs how people think about the severity of children with disabilities, the services provided to them, as well as who has the knowledge and skills to address their needs.

Within the district, the majority of students with disabilities are either in the regular education classrooms or in the self-contained classrooms, but there are hardly any students in a resource room. Here is the LRE data for the six schools in the first pilot study which show that the percentages of children in the resource room are very small. This data was provided by a district personnel (which was provided to the Florida Department of Education by the district).

Table 2

*The District’s LRE Data for Pilot Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% Regular Class</th>
<th>% Resource Room</th>
<th>% Special Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One principal shared her experience as a former regular education teacher in this district who worked with children with disabilities. She did not distinguish that the setting to educate a child with a learning disability would be different than the one wherein a child with an emotional disturbance (ED) would be educated. Since the district currently has self-contained classrooms specifically for children with Emotional Disturbance (ED) and children with Intellectual Disabilities (InD), she may experience some tension with what she believes and what the district’s approach is when it comes to children with ED or InD.

The problem though,

is that a lot of us have been veterans in the district.

I'm going into my 23rd year.

We've seen this. It's the swing again.

Here it comes again.

This is what we used to do back in the 90s.

When I was a (regular education) teacher, I had SLD kids.

But I also had EBD in my class.

That's just the way it was.

I never would fight for a self-contained setting for these kids.

They were part of my class.

So I think some of the veteran teachers are going to be like,

okay, so now we're going back the way it was.
But that's how education is a lot of times.

The principal of the Self-Contained Academic feeder school for the first pilot explained the evolution of inclusion in the 27 years that she has worked in this district. First the students with disabilities started out being included in the Specials classes, then they were included into the Science and Social Studies classes. Here is what she said:

It evolved through the years.

Inclusion meant, we schedule them for PE or Music at the same time.

We give them that inclusion piece of their day in Specials.

I remember that years ago.

That was a big thing in trying to train the special area people on how to deal with students with needs in the basic regular classes.

That was a hard time for me because I never liked the theory when people would say "those kids".

That just really rubs me the wrong way.

That was probably I can't recall the timing,

but that was the district's first, real attempt at inclusion

Then it became,

when the day was segmented a lot more than it is now,
they would do Science and Social Studies with the Basic Ed(ucation) class.

And so, those were the little steps towards inclusion.

But I would like to say too though that inclusion depended upon the culture of the school.

Inclusion in my opinion is a culture,

It's not about what time of the day do the kids get their services in the Basic Ed.

That's what I've always worked for,

that we don't have a culture that's like, Oh, those kids versus the basic (education kids).

Although, over the years what inclusion looks like in the District has changed, this principal does not like the distinction made between the students in the basic education classes and the ones who are in self-contained classes. Inclusion is not for a particular portion of the day, instead it is a culture.

In this subsection, the Pendulum Swing, as explained by the participants, is undergirded by an understanding that achievement performance is an integral component in relation to inclusion of particular children with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The current swing is toward a more inclusive environment, as indicated through the District-driven pilot study to disband one SCA within a feeder pattern.

**Responsibility for Educating Children with Disabilities.** From an inclusive education standpoint, who has the responsibility for educating children with disabilities? How is this decision made? Some participants shared concerns about whether this is a regular education concern or special education concern. The district resource teacher who has worked in this district for over 30 years explained,
A lot of people feel like those students don't belong in their classroom.

That's a shame.

We also have to understand that there are students that do not belong.

But what I think people don’t understand is (that)

if you talk about a self-contained academic class,

for example, in the elementary level,

alot of teachers will say, they don't belong in my class.

They belong in that self-contained academic (classroom).

For the particular students that do belong in the regular education classroom, “it’s a shame,” that some teachers do not view them as belonging in that environment. Instead they should go to a self-contained academic classroom where they do belong. Belonging in the regular education classroom is conditional since only some students should be there, but not others. The responsibility for educating children with disabilities depends on where they belong. There are conditions in place to determine if a child belongs in the regular classroom or the self-contained classroom. These conditions are undergirded by the assumptions that distinctions must be made regarding disability labels and severity. These conditions determine what happens to these students and where; additionally they consequentially shape the ones who do not belong which may be stigmatizing. Here is an assistant principal sharing an example of taking responsibility for educating a child who belongs in the regular education classroom.

It depends upon the true belief of the teacher and their experiences that they've had.

Sometimes it's shaping their next experience so they have a positive experience.
Sometimes it just takes that right kid that you have as a prototype.

I think of one student, who is in a wheelchair.

She came here in 3rd grade.

When she came to us her attendance was so dismal.

She had cerebral palsy and difficulty speaking,

obviously physical disabilities too

and below in meeting the standards in every area.

So that first year our goal was to get her to come to school.

That took a different mentality,

but by the end of the year she loved being at school.

She'd rather be here than anywhere else.

She's like our turnaround.

She came out of SCA (self-contained academic class).

She was in 4th grade and then the 5th grade inclusion.

She would be your role model for... look at what a kid who you think is ESE (can do)

but is just a kid who wants to achieve as much as she can,

if you support her.

This student was the example, the “prototype,” for the teachers to see that inclusion of children with disabilities is not for a particular type of child, in terms of disability or severity. As long as the belief to educate this child and the supports are in place, she can achieve
academically and do so outside of the self-contained academic classroom. When the assumption
is that any child can be successful in the regular classroom, procedures and practices are created
to provide the appropriate supports and services. The responsibility is shared. Further, one
principal explains the role of the teachers and what she envisions as the evolution of the role of
special educators,

Basic Ed teachers here have very open arms,

(They) never complain about having Special Education students in their classroom

They know that if they have Special Education kids in their classroom,

the support facilitator is going to be in the room for x portion of the day.

It's really that creative thinking of,

how can I serve (them) in a different way?

We know that they're all of our children,

it really doesn't matter what classroom they're in

it's a lot more fluid than, these are my kids.

My vision would be that you don't really even need a special educator,

(That) all teachers will have the head of a special educator

and say, oh, they can't do this. Quick, I'm going to try this.

Right now, I see that Special Education teacher as providing those things—
talking it through with teachers and modeling.

But my hopes would be that eventually,

it doesn't matter what type of learner you are,

all teachers know how to teach all children.

This principal’s comments focus the attention on the role of teachers in educating children with disabilities. She does not put the onus only on the special education teacher but on any teacher. Teachers should “have the head of a special educator” is a statement that expresses that this principal values the skills and knowledge of a special education teacher.

In the Contextual Discourse, the pendulum swing and the responsibility for educating children with disabilities are discussed. The nuances found within the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of this district shape the discourse around inclusion of particular children within this district-driven pilot inclusion study.

**The Politics of Leading Discourse**

This discourse focuses on the political aspects associated with leadership. Determining which initiatives and procedures are appropriate to concentrate on and how resources are distributed (i.e., time, money, spaces, people), are political acts. In this section are examples of how these political acts are instituted and construed through the following subsections: The Powers-that-Be, The District is Broken, and Communication Issues.

**The Powers-that-Be.** There is a distinctive organizational hierarchical structure present in the district. Descriptors used by some participants for those who make decisions that shape the policies and procedures of the entire district are: *the-powers-that-be* and *the third floor*. 
These descriptors are used to describe the members of the superintendent’s staff—the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the CFO, and the area superintendents. Each of the area superintendents oversee the schools in one of the four regions. The superintendent staff’s offices are located on the third floor of the main central office building. Though the decision to implement the inclusion pilot study was authorized by the superintendent’s staff, there is lack of consensus about whether or not this is a district initiative. The ESE supervisor explains,

I can only support the schools that I'm supporting because I'm not higher up.

I'm not a director or area super (intendent).

And so I don't know that we're there yet.

That's why even the second set of schools is called the second set of pilot schools.

It's not even called, we're working on inclusive practices in (this) county.

No. We have one pilot and now we're doing a second pilot.

I don't know how much strides I can make until our district,

as a whole—and I'm talking at the superintendent level—

makes inclusion one of their priorities.

And at this point, I don't know that it is.

I don't believe that it is a district priority as of now,

so our money, our time, and our efforts and all of that is toward

what the higher-ups believe are our district priorities,
and inclusion is not one of them.

This ESE supervisor, who is tasked with overseeing both inclusion pilot studies and who has the autonomy to make decisions regarding the trainings and implementation in the schools has determined that this work is not a district priority. The supports (i.e., the money, time, and efforts) are not in place to make this an initiative. One of the area superintendents explained that this supervisor is “critical to operationalizing those big ideas in real-time, real life… clearly, she’s the expert in this work, in the inclusion work and I depend on her for that.” He continues to share that the ESE Director’s involvement is indirect but since she is the supervisor’s “boss,” she has to be kept “in the loop.” Here is the same area superintendent’s explanation of what constitutes a district initiative in relation to the inclusion pilot:

(An Initiative) I think anytime we agree, more or less, on a superintendent level that we’re going to invest some time and energy into accomplishing something.

I’ll give you an example.

As we developed the ideas around this (inclusion pilot)--

there would be a conversation at the superintendent staff meeting

just to say, You know what, we believe this is the right way to go,

and we have some initial ideas of the first steps

and how we’re going to go about doing it.

Prior to this year, I think part of it becoming an initiative is getting that superintendent level approval that
in fact everybody’s aware of it,

eybody supports the idea.

People are willing to put resources into it, right.

Because we did add some support facilitation teachers to these schools.

Not every (school) but a lot of them.

And that required superintendent approval to say we’re going to put resources toward it.

There’s basically a presentation… Kind of informal

I’m basically saying we would like to close that (SCA) program.

Here’s our idea about supporting the other schools (in)

creating more of an inclusion and resource model.

One of the things that is critical at that level is basically

being able to reflect on what’s worked and what’s not working.

It was rather easy for me to argue that

the self-contained academic programs are problematic on multiple levels.

They’re problematic in terms of achievement data.

We have been tracking that and the new kids were not improving.
They’re problematic and that they cause competition between schools

and this idea of the family gets sent here then it gets sent here.

It’s rough on families, it’s rough on schools.

…talking as a district,

I would say there is not a strong vision in terms of is this a huge priority?

Do we, as a district, clearly understand the path that we’re on?

I would have to say that’s maybe to no.

Only because what we’re doing right now is being driven by the area superintendents.

So I think the other area superintendents would agree very easily.

But when you go up to superintendent, school board members, other layers,

they would say, Yes, we believe in inclusion.

But I also would say they don’t have enough of an understanding
to know what that means and what it would take to move in that direction,
because it’s easy to say.

But knowing what that means and how to achieve it and

are you willing to put the resources behind it?

That to me is vision and is part of vision.
It’s part of vision which I would say is not in place.

I would want to see in its documents, in its conversations that

d this is clearly a high priority and you don’t see that. Not yet.

The area superintendent articulates that the inclusion pilot study is not yet a district initiative because it is not fully understood or supported with resources. It is not a part of the district’s vision though he has substantiated the need to create a more “inclusion and resource model,” in the district by using students’ achievement data. Setting up the foundation of inclusion from the onset with the superintendent’s staff, that the development of a resource model is imperative, as it shapes the thinking and actions that make distinctions between disability, severity, and placements. In a follow up interview in mid-June of 2016, the ESE Supervisor shared crucial information that she was notified of, only hours before she sat with me, by the ESE Director and the ESE Senior Supervisor:

I just found out this morning that the plan is by the 2018-19 school year,

all of our self-contained academic programs will be gone.

All of those kids that were in self-contained academic will be out in the basic (classroom)

I was told that I need to start working on a plan of how might that roll out,

how in 2017-18 might we, begin to prepare schools to be able to do this type of work?

I am concerned that schools didn't get a say in any of it.

That concerns me that the building administrators didn’t get a say.
That concerns me.

I don’t know that we still know enough.

I think that it would have been better to maybe wait to make that determination.

How long does it take for schools to make the change?

What does it take to make that change?

I think that when you move at such a fast pace like that,

you’re bound to have hiccups,

but the hiccups might be so big that you can't stop it.

I fear that we will go back to having a self-contained environment again

because that's what we've always done especially in our District.

I kind of talked to you about that pendulum.

Then, we're going to swing back to having self-contained again.

That's what I'm afraid of.

I think that if we don’t build better understanding around it,

that’s what we’re going to get.

It may end up being a District initiative,
and that may be their thinking

and when I say their I'm talking about the third floor people,

the powers-that-be.

That maybe what they’re thinking is,

we need to put the MTSS structures in place first

and then we can look at inclusion,

because then that way people know how to better support them.

Maybe that's the thought process

and that makes sense to me if that's the thought process.

Maybe, next year inclusion will be more of a priority.

I don't know.

The decision to scale up so quickly is quite disconcerting for the ESE Supervisor, who explains that more time is needed to see how this works. It has only been one year of implementation within this first pilot and much information is still needed before completely disbanding the SCAs in three years. She is bothered that the “third floor people” did not seek advice from the building administrators prior to making this decision and uncertain whether scaling up quickly will then create too many issues and lead the “powers-that-be” to re-create self-contained environments within the district. The pendulum may swing back again. Further information was later shared by the area superintendent about the pilot:

You start with a pilot, and we often do that here
in terms of like, Well, we know this but we don’t necessarily know if we go this direction, will it work?

Pilots are ways of trying, to sample before you start to scale up.

There was always that idea, because I know there was discontent in the schools with the way it was currently working.

Thinking pilot and the idea that we’ll probably scale up, absolutely.

I was pretty optimistic that this was the right path but also worried about how you get there because that matters.

You can sort of do a quick implementation of something and end up in no better place.

So the pilot is a trial so that you can look for where the barriers are, where the trouble is.

As you scale up, you’re in a lot better position to do it quickly and have the experience of,

Well, we tried this and we know what works and doesn’t work.

Now, we can do it again over here and then we can do it again over here.
I always thought we would scale up.

(A) mistake we often make is we implement and we monitor a little bit
and then we’re sort of like, Oh, we got it,
and then we let it go.

As soon as you let it go, it will quickly, often times, just go back to the original (way).

It seems that the decision to scale up was part of the initial discussion/presentation to the superintendent’s staff, though this area superintendent has previously indicated this is not a district priority. While it is stated that the pilot is a trial to figure out the barriers, only one year has been completed in this trial before directing the ESE supervisor to create a plan so that within three years SCAs will be nonexistent in this district. Attempting to scale up so quickly with only one year in a pilot study may end up shaping policies and practices that revert back to instituting SCAs within a few years. Does the information garnered from this first year of the pilot study provide enough knowledge to make decisions that shape how the district proceeds with inclusion of particular children with disabilities?

**The District is Broken.** There are some issues that many participants spoke about regarding supports and communication. These issues were present throughout—in the layers within the district, the layers within the pilot study, and the layers within the individual schools, Here is the feeder school’s principal explaining her role in this first pilot study and why this district is broken:

As the feeder school and the feeder principal,
and this is where I'm going to be very candid about the district's role.

My initial push for this (pilot), came out of the fact

that through this feeder pattern concept,

because every child’s situation, every case, everything is so different,

it became very evident,

I had eight different schools feeding into my school.

It was very clear that the culture of our feeder pattern was not inclusive.

And so some schools used us (by saying)

we can't meet the kids' needs within our framework and so they need to go to you.

We can't meet their needs.

And so we became the final point for a lot of these kids

and then we would get them at our school.

Within sometimes a couple of months,

sometimes it was after a year of getting to know them,

we would have them out in basic (education) classrooms.

They would be, for all intents and purposes, the definition of inclusion.

They were not in our self-contained classrooms all day long.
It just became an internal hole for me, that we're shipping kids off to different schools.

I became very involved when a school would want to send a child. The systems at the district were broken.

What was happening is, us as principals, it was pitting us against each other.

There were several times where I felt like I was the gatekeeper for my school. My colleagues would get angry with me because I was asking questions like,

what did you do to help this child be successful?

What worked for the child in your school?

When you hear nothing but, Well, it didn't work, it didn't work, it didn't work.

I had a group of people at the time, we were like you know what, we would have the kids come, for the kids. The system was broken.

The feeder principal and her staff wanted the students to come to their school because the neighborhood schools were not first trying to provide an environment of success for them. These schools would send the children without first putting supports in place to help them and resulted in discord among the principals. This feeder school concept does not work. The power
relations embedded in this feeder concept shaped conditions where principals were in opposition with each other. Another, but more pressing, complication to this dynamic relationship, is when a district personnel would make a placement decision about a child with disregard to the efforts of the school. The district overrides the process.

That truly is what made the system broken.

When it all came down to it,

the work at the school didn't make a difference

and someone above us would place kids.

Honestly, that is still happening.

Though placement decisions are sometimes made by “someone above us,” the feeder principal and her staff continue to provide an education out of the self-contained academic classroom for the majority of the students. These efforts were implemented because this was the culture of the school, not because of a district pilot study. One of the principals within this feeder pattern explained further about how this fits within her school’s collective vision that all children can learn:

If we really believe that all kids can learn

and then we say, Oh, but Billy can't.

Let's send him to (the feeder school).

Then that doesn't match with our belief system.

If we believe we can find the opportunities and
provide the conditions so all kids can be successful,

how come for (Billy) we can't?

So it's kind of questioning teachers and staff

and guiding them and helping them think a little differently.

You want to keep them

but you also want them to have the services they deserve and need.

If you can't do that,

I always tell the parents I can't provide that service,

but I wish I could.

I physically can't.

It's not my choice.

That would be ideal, yes, but it's not always practical.

We don't make those decisions.

As far as the school district level,

they allot you the services that can come to your building.

This principal sometimes has to make the difficult decision to send a student to the feeder school because she does not have the resources to provide what that child needs at her school.

She is restricted with what her school can do for her students because it is the district who
assigns the services and supports to certain schools. The district puts in place in particular schools the supports for specific self-contained environments—SCA, EBD, and InD—in certain feeder schools. Only those schools are given the specialized resources to address the needs of students who fall under those disability categorizations. According to the ESE Supervisor, it is cost-effective this way. The district’s decision to allocate resources to certain schools and not others shape how decisions are made for children with disabilities, including the instructional and service delivery choices to address their needs.

There were also issues with communication related to district personnel not being privy to information at the forefront of decision making that directly related to them. Instead, notification happened as an afterthought. The ESE Supervisor shared how she was told about the selection of schools in the second pilot study. Though she was aware of a second pilot being considered, where the expectation was such that she would spearhead all efforts in the new area just as she has done with the first pilot study, she was not part of the final decision making. This is her account of what happened:

How I found out that they were doing that feeder pattern

was that the area super(intendents) must have met and made that decision

and then an email went out from that particular group’s area superintendent

that said, Hey you guys have been selected as the next set of pilot schools,

and then I was CCd on that (email).

That was done right around April.
When I found that out,

I took that email and forwarded it to the ESE Senior Supervisor and the ESE Director. Then attached the previous agenda that we had had from the previous (feeder) school and just said, I'm finding out that we're doing this pilot and I do have some concerns about it being such a late time in the year.

We're going to really need to start getting on this right away.

Please see the attached previous agenda from what we did with the (first) pilot.

I don't think they (Supervisor and Director) responded to the email.

The ESE Supervisor, the person tasked with overseeing the implementation of both pilot studies, was informed by being copied on an email about the next selected feeder pattern for the study. The type of communication speaks to the district’s lack of efforts toward making this inclusive work a priority. Moreover, her immediate supervisors (the ESE Senior Supervisor and the ESE Director) did not respond to her concerns about the late start to the second pilot or how she was notified.

**Communication Issues.** The first pilot schools were notified in February of the previous year and implementation began in August, whereas this second pilot schools were notified in April of this year with the implementation starting in August. The notification to the selected feeder schools of the second pilot study was sent later in the year. These schools are located in poor communities and all are Title 1. Another type of communication issue arose. The feeder principal for the second pilot shared a different type of communication issue.

You are saying I'm keeping everyone? Absolutely. Absolutely
That was what was said to me.

And then come allocation time in April, that wasn't the truth.

They actually cut me two ESE teachers and four instructional assistants.

I said, how am I supposed to do this?

Just tell me how, when these are the kids.

Just because they're going into Basic Ed doesn't mean they don't need the support.

We didn't cure cancer overnight or anything.

They still need help, and you are taking this?

Well, it's based on allocation.

No, it's not.

I went at it for about a month.

I kept a lot of information between me and (the assistant principal) because this was affecting people's jobs.

I'm not telling these people that they don't have a job yet until I'm done fighting.

So in order to keep things pretty much the same long story short, my teachers are fine in ESE.

Because we’re Title 1
I bought three instructional assistants.

I am able to keep five instead of six.

So it worked out. We were good.

But that's why I shielded my staff with the information.

I don't give up.

When I know something is right for these kids,

and in order to make things work,

I will fight until I can't fight anymore.

The feeder principal of the new pilot fought for the supports that her school needed. Though she was promised that her SCA staff would remain, many of them were cut due to allocation. The efforts of the district to provide the supports for the students at the roll out of the second pilot were quite minimal. The communication was amiss, and without her steadfast efforts to protect her staff members from being fired the situation would have been worse. Using the resources that are allocated at her school (i.e., Title 1 funds), she was able to secure some of the personnel supports she needed.

Prior to coming to this feeder school last October, this principal worked at another elementary school where an SCA unit was added right before she left. The same ESE Supervisor worked with her on starting this new unit. The principal calls her “the self-contained guru.” Now, she is at a school where the SCA units will be disbanded. Within two years, she has opened an SCA unit in one elementary and closed SCA units in another. She said, “I’ve been through the whole cycle now of starting it and ending it.” If the district’s efforts, according to
the area superintendent of the first pilot, are to end all SCAs by the 2018-19 school year, then why start a new SCA unit last year? Here is a side note provided by the ESE Supervisor:

…just as a side note that's funny.

We do have a school in our district that just got the self-contained academic students for this year.

They just became a new self-contained feeder school.

The contradicting message of this side note is troubling. Starting a new feeder school requires additional funds and resources to be allocated to the school. Are the intentions to truly end all SCA’s?

In the Politics of Leading Discourse, tensions and contradictions are shared through the subsections of the Powers-that-Be, The District is Broken, and Communication Issues. An example of a compounding contradiction is that the District has decided to scale up the pilot inclusion study work where all SCAs will be disbanded by the 2018-2019 school year, while recently opening up a new SCA feeder pattern school. The complications that these type of tensions and contradictions create is evident in the discourses of this District.

The Logistics of Inclusive Schooling Discourse

The logistics discourse is about how to do inclusion. What processes and practices are needed in order to have more inclusive schools? What does an inclusive school look like? These are the questions to think about within this discourse. The coordination of resources namely personnel, fiscal, and time is important to note when considering the barriers and the
limitations of doing inclusion as intended within this district’s pilot study. The discussion around logistics is explained in the subsections: Roadblocks, Structural Consensus, and Good Teaching Practices.

**Roadblocks.** There are some obstructions to the inclusion work in this district. Some can be addressed superficially and others may need more intense training or work to be done. One such issue is building capacity of the administrators and staff. ESE Director explains that building the capacity of principals to work in schools that have self-contained classrooms is very important to her:

I believe that all those students in K-12 should have access to Gen. Ed. to where it’s appropriate to them.

One of the very interesting things I find is administrators that have never worked with those students or in a building that has those students, have more barriers.

I know through their principal PLCs, they’ll go to a school site and they’ll have their principal meeting but sometimes they walk through classrooms.

This year, I want at least the Gen. Ed. self-contained classes (SCA), we got to walk through and look at their rigor too.

That’s going to be some compelling information.
I think, when we can come back and say,

this percentage of Gen. Ed. classes have this much rigor happening

but when you walk through a self-contained Gen. Ed. Class (SCA),

I would hope I would see the rigor. I don't know how the teacher can?

There might be Superman and Wonder Woman that had been doing that

but I think we're going to see a pretty big discrepancy.

I think that will be really compelling for principals.

I really want the principals,

when they're in a building that has our medically fragile kids,

or students with autism, or behavioral students

they’ve got to go through those rooms too.

And just so, they get some exposure.

You know, if I had a magic wand

like that would be the only way you get to be a principal,

you spend time in schools with children with disabilities, with significant disabilities

and then you spend time across different grade levels.

The ESE Director would like principals to be prepared to understand different

populations of students with disabilities, along with the differing service delivery environments
(i.e., SCA). Principals with this type of knowledge would be able to better understand and implement procedures and practices specific to children with disabilities. There is a barrier when principals’ working knowledge about what is happening in different self-contained environments impede their understanding of the level of rigor that they are exposed to. Since there is much responsibility involved for teachers in SCA classrooms, it would take someone with Superman or Wonder Woman powers to make it rigorous for the children. The feeder principal of the new pilot study shared a similar sentiment as the ESE Director.

Be familiar with the different service models.

I think that's key.

There needs to be some kind of background understanding of what resource looks like,

what support facilitation could looks like,

even what co-teach looks like,

because that has changed over the years.

I also feel the law of ESE needs to be communicated.

ESE is always that big umbrella of law and legal issues.

The district can prepare principals so they understand what an inclusive school looks like which starts with an understanding of the service delivery models and the law. These service delivery models are associated with the continuum of services. This feeder principal has worked in schools with multiple types of service delivery options and can attest to the importance of this knowledge to her current placement within the second pilot. Here is the career district resource
teacher explaining further the consequence of not having this knowledge and its impact on the decision making process of a school regarding inclusion.

We have some administrators that were ESE teachers prior to being administrators.

That helps in some respects

but also we have a lot of people that have been administrators

that have never dealt with ESE.

(Here’s) one situation.

We have a new administration in a school, both principal and AP.

A very strong ESE teacher that may or may not know what she's doing, who tells the administration what to do.

They listen to her.

She's making decisions based on what she wants

and what we're finding is she's never in class.

She's not teaching these students.

They have called us out

but they're not utilizing the information that we give them.

And that's become very frustrating for us.

Principals with experience and an understanding of the different service delivery options for children with disabilities, along the continuum, are better equipped to lead schools. In this
example, a principal relies on the knowledge of a veteran ESE teacher and makes decisions that shape the procedures and practices of inclusion in her school.

**Structural Consensus.** There is one particular structure that has been a current focus in this district to support all children and their varying needs---Multi Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS). The ESE Director explains the tiers of MTSS as Tier 1- the standards, Tier 2- remediate the standards that are lacking, and Tier 3- focus on the skill deficit. With the dismantling of SCAs for the pilot study, where children with disabilities may return to their homeschools to receive support in the regular education classrooms, only a few students may return to a school. How are they to receive services in the regular classroom? The district resource teacher explains what would happen:

Because you may only get, say 2 to 3 kids back at your school.

That doesn't warrant another teacher or another IA (instructional assistant).

That's where it's going to get a little difficult for schools

and that's where the professional development that we train

is going to help them see it can be done.

You just have to put in collaborative teaching,

you've got to put in differentiated instruction,

and you've got to put in MTSS to make sure

the kids are truly getting their Tier 1, 2, and 3

in the basic (education) and then ESE on top of that.
And that's where your supports are.

It's going to take a while for schools to figure that out.

How to get it all to work.

There does need to come a time

that we can’t always have everything be school based management.

There needs to be some true district initiatives

that are going to be the same everywhere you go,

and that’s not happening right now.

Everybody knows they’re supposed to do MTSS,

everybody knows that there should be ESE supports

but everybody gets to choose the way they wish to do it at their school.

Depending on the students and the needs of your school

things are going to be different from school to school

but the actual structure should be the same, regardless.

And that’s not happening.

The district resource teacher explains that the MTSS infrastructure would benefit the students and meet their needs. How it is implemented in schools is problematic, however, because the decision making processes involved are left up to the school administrators. Not
everyone follows the same framework, and there is a need for the district to provide the specifics about what that structure looks like. The area superintendent explained this district’s approach with principals:

In this system,

I’m talking (about this) county,

the principal still have a tremendous amount of autonomy.

It’s the way this organization is operated.

I’ve been in other organizations so it’s a bit different.

But these principals really are given the authority.

I give them the authority.

That’s your building. You know your teachers.

We’re all agreeing this needs to happen

but it doesn’t happen exactly the same way in six different schools.

Principals in this district have a level of autonomy not found in other districts. They have open authority to make decisions and implement district policies suitable for the context of their schools. Therefore, MTSS structures may look quite different in one school versus another.

This is quite problematic in the pilot study for the children who are now receiving their instruction in the regular education classroom instead of the SCA. The ESE Supervisor explains,

When we think about inclusive practices,

a lot of that stress that teachers feel is
because of a lack of structure of MTSS.

Because if you really think about the multi-tiered systems,
that entire system is meant to support all students.

I think that because there's a misunderstanding of some of those pieces,
that it's hard for schools to always implement it.

There's nobody going out,

there's not somebody that goes out to schools and says

Oh! This is how you could structure it.

So if you get a principal who just happens to think in that way,

and does that really well,

then that school's good and runs well.

If you have a principal who may not be as great,

then you get what you get.

The issues that arise as shared by the district resource teacher and the ESE Supervisor are a result of the autonomy that principals have within this district. The principals create MTSS structures that fit within their context, and discipline their staff to implement practices appropriate for their setting. Here is another issue, a quite significant one, from the ESE Director. She explains how this autonomy is an obstacle to sustainability of the MTSS infrastructure in the district:
MTSS.

Sometimes it lives with a person

and when a person goes away that goes away.

when I look at the literature its

how do you make that sustainable,

that it's not just about the principal in the building.

It's not just about the ESE teacher.

My focus is about the sustainability and about the infrastructure.

I've seen us do things over and over again

that only live because of the person there.

It really has to be part of our ongoing professional development training.

So, it's not even just through the year 2018 to 19,

it has to be something we tend to for a very long time.

We talked last time about the pendulum (that) swings back and forth,

back and forth.

We’re just in another pendulum (swing)

but I don't want it to be a pendulum.

I want it to stay part of our belief system, our core values, and our district’s
and what's right for children.

The ESE Director is quite concerned about sustaining the MTSS structures in schools. Due to the autonomy that principals have in making decisions that shape how this infrastructure is implemented, it becomes problematic when MTSS is not expected to be implemented uniformly across schools throughout the District.

**Good Teaching Practices.** According to one of the district resource teachers, good teaching does not happen differently in regular education versus special education. Instead, good teaching practices are for education in general and can be applied interchangeably to children in regular education classrooms as well as the ones in special education. In this district, good inclusive teaching happens when teachers are trained appropriately. In this pilot, it was determined that the schools involved could receive the Compelling Why training, the Collaborative Teaching Training and the Deconstructing Standards Training. The ESE Supervisor and the two district resource teachers created these trainings (utilizing FIN’s resources) and are responsible for conducting them, but only at the request of the principals. The ESE Supervisor communicated with the administrators about the trainings and the supports that they can provide and four out of the six schools utilized them frequently throughout the year.

I cannot force people.

From a district perspective, from this position,

this is where I get frustrated.

Because if I am reaching out to you saying

I will help you,
and then I don’t hear back from you

and then you turn around and blame—because that's what they do.

turn around and say, oh the district didn't support us.

Oh, the district didn't do this.

There's nothing I can do about that.

So we've seen it this year with two of the schools in the pilot.

They didn't ask for our support.

Those principals wouldn't let us come in

and the perception of the teachers is, we didn't support them.

The teachers didn't know.

Frustration is felt because the efforts that the district personnel have taken to support the building administrators have not been appreciated and are utilized only by a few. Instead, there is miscommunication; thus, blaming occurs when support, in the form of professional development, is not received at the teacher level. The teaching practices that the teachers may need are not being shared with the teachers. One of the principals who did not seek assistance from the district personnel, shared another view of this situation:

Last May when we were looking at professional development

that needed to happen,

there were two principals, myself one of them,
that felt like our schools were further along

with the culture side of what inclusion meant.

If there was a training developed at the district for that which was great,

but it needed to be differentiated

because the (pilot) schools were not all in the same place.

When I voiced about the training that was sent to us

We said, you know what,

you're going to be taking our teachers two years before.

Like, they're beyond this.

There's a need to talk about it but you don't need to spend a lot of time on it.

And so there was a situation

and people got angry with some of the feedback that was given

and it was never meant to be personal,

but people got angry

so it just put a wedge in our group.

They did all the right things by including the stakeholders.

but if you're going to ask a group of people their opinion
and do what you want anyway,

then don't waste their time.

Because just like you need to do with kids,

you have to differentiate based on where they are, then move them forward.

If you're going to approach a pilot

that is feedback and group problem solving

then you need to make sure that you're showing evidence

that you're using the people, ideas, and feedback.

With the trainings and professional development,

because of that situation that happened,

they put it out there and said,

This is what we have. You call us if you want it.

But in the life of the school,

what it all comes down to

is if you don't feel like it's going to meet the needs of your school,
you're not going to call.

I went into this (pilot study) because of the needs of our school

but I also went into this for the good of the district

because the systems of the district were broken.

The account this principal shared is different from that of the ESE Supervisor. The principal did not believe that the professional development opportunities were suitable for her faculty because they were beyond what it entailed. Differentiating the training to work for her school environment would have been better. Since her voice was not heard and the trainings were not adapted, she did not utilize these opportunities for her school. Her autonomy to decide was clearly exercised.

A resource that was provided by the district, and created by the ESE Specialist and the District Resource Teachers, is a Wiki page with inclusion resources and tools. This is a publicly accessible site that is encouraged to be used by administrators and teachers. On this site, the definition of inclusion as determined by the district states:

All students are considered general education students first and least restrictive environment (LRE) decisions should be made from the perspective of providing supports within age-appropriate, general education settings using the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible.

There is a continuum of support document, known as the decision making tree which explains in detail the supports that must be in place in the general education classroom. Further, six specific questions are provided as considerations prior to determining if a separate class services are
required. Then it specifies what instruction would look like in the separate class resource pullout and additionally what a full time separate class would entail. This decision making tree is supposed to provide direct guidance with regard to making decisions about where children should receive special education services within the continuum of support model.

There is also a framework for inclusion flowchart which stipulates that the collaborative teaching service delivery models (i.e. co-teaching and support facilitation) can be implemented through using the six collaborative teaching approaches (six co-teaching models). These teaching approaches should include planning, effective instruction, and assessment, each of which has specific components. Furthermore, there is a framework for professional development that explains the trainings specific to inclusive education. Now the required trainings are Collaborate Teaching, Deconstructing Standards, Kagan Cooperative Structures, Implementing Instructional Technology to Provide Classroom Assessment and Accommodations. The optional trainings include Differentiated Instruction and Executive Functioning. These tools, resources and trainings shape and are shaped by particular understandings of inclusion and disability.

The ESE Supervisor shared her vision of an inclusive school. It can be found on a youtube video. Typically this video is shown in the Collaborative Teaching trainings within the district. A superintendent of a school district in Canada explains how full inclusion is implemented and numerous principals share their contextual experiences. Interestingly this video is used to start the discussion about inclusion in this pilot study in a district that holds steadfast the belief in the necessity of the continuum of services and the focus on adding the resource service delivery option. The ESE Supervisor’s utopic vison of an inclusive district exists in Edmonton Canada, in a full inclusion district.

It's a community school
the video from Canada.

It's a school where everybody's in.

How do you create an environment where everybody's in?

This child does belong here.

This is my community. This is my community school.

This is where I go to school

then everybody in the building works to figure out

how do we support the kids that attend the school.

Everybody's in.

The main reason why I say that again,

is because when I think of our society as a whole,

we don't put people in places

that was back in the 1800s

where we sent people to asylums

and said they couldn't attend school

and put them in cages.

We don't do that nowadays.
Everybody has value.

Everybody has something that they can contribute

and it's our job to figure out what that is and to support it.

Again, I love that video from Canada.

It’s Utopia.

Each school talked about how they create that environment and it's different.

I think that’s where we really have to start getting principals to buy into that as well,

instead of blaming the kids and blaming the environment that they’re in

It's about what are we doing.

If we know we have this population of kids

what are we doing to support those kids?

He (superintendent of Edmonton) said at the end,

if our schools don’t create this environment,

who’s going to do it?

If we don’t start teaching this in our schools

and we don’t start teaching tolerance and acceptance,

where are these kids going to learn these skills?
And he's right.

The ESE Supervisor explained the importance of supporting the students, instead of blaming them. The context is important, the belief to help all students in a regular education classroom is key, and making sure that schools and districts are creating this type of environment for all children is crucial.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the governing and interrelated discourses found throughout the various sources of data. The philosophical understandings of inclusion discourse, the contextual discourse, the politics of leading discourse and the logistics of inclusive schooling discourse were explicated further to illuminate how these discourses shape the policies, procedures, and practices within one district. Furthermore, how power relations are implicated through the power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power are shared. Contradictions, commonalities, and tensions are explained through specific examples from interviews. In the next chapter, I provide a situated discussion about the commonalities, the implications of this study, and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 5
Situated Discussion

Introduction

This study explores the discursive formation of inclusion of an ESE leadership team to illuminate how the discourses are produced, the procedures and practices regulated, and the power relations legitimated. This study utilized a critically-oriented discourse analysis approach that is grounded in Foucault’s theories of power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power. Since “discourse analysis is…a tool for explicating political issues and conflicts” (Grue, 2015, p. 9), this study explored the discourses of inclusion and how power is implicated in this productive process. The research questions addressed are:

1. What are the discourses of inclusion for children with disabilities within a particular school district?
   a. How do these discourses shape policies, procedures, and practices?
   b. What are the tensions and convergences among and within these discourses?

2. In what ways do the discourses of inclusion legitimize power relations within the discursive formation of inclusive education of a district ESE leadership team?

The data for this study were collected from April 2016 to July 2016. The analysis of these data sources occurred through an iterative process using Gee’s (2011) thinking devices (i.e. tools of inquiry) that specify certain questions to ask of the data, and Jackson and Mazzei’s
“reading-the data-while-thinking-the-theory” approach (2013, p. 264). As a result of this type of analysis, particular findings were produced.

Four discourses of inclusion were dominant: the philosophical understandings of inclusion discourse, the contextual discourse, the politics of leading discourse, and the logistics of inclusive schooling discourse. These are explained in chapter four along with how these discourses shape the policies and processes within the school district. Additionally, the power relations ingrained within and among these discourses are emphasized with particular focus on the power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power of the District as the institution. In this chapter, the findings are discussed in relation to commonalities and the extant literature, and then implications for research and practice are provided. The chapter concludes with the researcher’s endnote.

A Critique

This dissertation study explores the discourses of inclusion within a district through a critically-oriented discourse analysis. The function of discourses is to enable regimes of truths (Foucault, 1977). These truths are socially constructed and embedded in the historicity of the local as the district, and more broadly the state, and national contexts. The description of the interrelated discourses illuminates a particular understanding of inclusion, as institutionalized in the District and negotiated as the truth. The analysis explains how this particular description of inclusion has come to be accepted and sustained through tensions and relations of power, through which policies, procedures and practices are created. As a result, this truth became normalized.
The critique involved in this type of study is not an assessment of whether or not the district is doing inclusion correctly. Instead it is uncovering the unquestioned or matter-of-fact assumption(s) that undergird the understanding of inclusion of children with disabilities. Foucault (cited in St. Pierre, 2014) explains:

Critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, [on] what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest. (p. 4)

Utilizing this explanation of critique with the particular power/knowledge relation entrenched in the District, the understanding of inclusion, as represented in the discourses shared in this study, is anchored in a structure of difference emphasized through ability. This underlying assumption is evidenced in the continuum of segregating spaces, within the academic achievement frame, and through the expertise of specialists and professionalized knowledge. The understanding of inclusion through essentializing ability differences discursively shapes the policies, procedures and practices of inclusive education in the District.

**Continuum of Segregating Spaces**

The continuum of services is a continuum of segregating spaces that has been legitimized through this district’s political and historical milieu. The categorical descriptions of disability are comparisons. These comparisons are imbued with an assumption of normality (Thomson, 1997). This assumption isolates and stigmatizes children and problematizes where they belong. Their labels are distinctive markers that normalize disability and these “constructed categories…often become stigmas for the people who occupy them” (Stein, 2004, p. xvii). This district’s policies and practices regarding children with disabilities are instituted within a
continuum of services that ranges from the most restrictive or segregated services (i.e., a separate school) to the least restrictive service (i.e. the regular classroom). The paradox is that they discuss inclusion of children with disabilities in the context of segregating spaces. The area superintendent explained,

But on that continuum between self-contained and full on inclusion, we put resource in the middle. We didn’t do resource. We either said, you can go to self-contained or you stay here. We started talking about … We know this doesn’t work. The self-contained academic program doesn’t work... We were looking at that. What if we built something that really more aligned with, you need to be considered in the mainstream. You need to be included in your school.

In this district, the resource setting is much more in alignment with being included or “mainstreamed” in the school than the self-contained academic classes. The focus on adding the resource setting within the continuum of services, fills in the missing service delivery option and continues to perpetuate that separate spaces for children with disabilities are needed. This is a disciplined understanding that produces and regulates a pervasive assumption that warrants the continuum of services and structures distinctive spaces for children with disabilities. Discourses not only structure ways of thinking, being and acting but are also structured by ways of thinking, being and acting (Gee, 2011). The district then is a disciplinary institution that “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes” (Foucault, 1977, p. 183) children with disabilities to fit within this continuum.

Furthermore, valuation of the continuum of services as the means by which children with disabilities are considered included or not, is in opposition to Sapon-Shevin’s (2007) description, “Inclusion means belonging---right from the beginning---and not having to earn one’s way into a
less restrictive setting for a short period of time” (p. 79). This quote is stated in the book that was selected by the ESE Supervisor to be used with the participants in the district pilot study to explain the importance of inclusion in schools, and how to address some of the expected barriers in classrooms and schools. The foundational assumption of this author’s understanding of inclusion is in direct contrast with the district’s understanding; yet, this book was carefully chosen to be used with the participants in the pilot study.

**Delivering Resource Services.** The resource service delivery option is practically non-existent in this district. The majority of children with disabilities are distributed in the regular classroom or a self-contained classroom. An integral component of the pilot study is to focus on the establishment and maintenance of this service as a more viable option than the academic self-contained classroom for students with particular disability categorizations. The ESE Supervisor explained:

…after we had looked at the data (FCAT) this is where we decided, okay what else can we do with this population of kids. Obviously based on research that we've gotten from Florida Inclusion Network and additional research that I've done, we know that best practice for these kids is to be in the basic (classroom). The problem is that when you put them out into basic (classroom), people would say that they don't get enough support. Then they need to have that level of resource. There's that middle ground, so that's where I can give kids access to general curriculum and general standards but then I can help fill gaps in with resource level, which is technically self-contained. So that's how the whole concept started of the pilot. It’s thinking about, how do I get these kids that were in a full-time self-contained environment better access to grade level standards?
The decision was made to add resource services as a result of reviewing the data of students’ performance on a state standardized assessment which addresses the grade level standards. The resource option provided the space where students can have access to the regular education classroom where the “general curriculum” is taught and also be able to work on the gaps with the students. The ingrained knowledge that certain types of service delivery options, illustrative in the clustering of students in a resource setting, are required to educate children with differing disabling labels are reasoned through disciplinary power. “It is the examination which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgment, assures the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification” (Foucault, 1984, p. 204).

**Feeder Pattern Issues.** The district is broken is a sentiment expressed in this study. The feeder school principal shared that principals were pitted against each other and that she was the gatekeeper of her school, specifically regarding the self-contained academic classrooms housed there. The dilemma of her responsibility of educating children or to her colleagues (i.e., principals) and the district caused angst. She described why the district is broken:

I had eight different schools feeding into my school. It was very clear that the culture of our feeder pattern was not inclusive. And so some schools used us as the... we can't meet the kids' needs within our framework and so they need to go to you... We had this pseudo system that we were supposed to be following, paperwork that need to be filled out, and even the documentation of intervention and all this kind of thing. We have this pseudo system, but when it all came down to it, one person usually from the district could come in and say, you know what, No, the kids are going to be placed at that school... We're supposed to not place students based on the label. We're supposed to be placing students based on their needs. There's frustration at the school level that it doesn't
really matter because there is one person at the district who could just come in or two people from the district who come in and say, no, you know what: That kid is going to be placed at your school. That happened many, many times. That was probably the key to the fact that the system was broken…. I can put it simplistically, disregard for work at the school level or the opinion of the people at the school level.

Since the self-contained academic classrooms were selectively housed in particular schools within each of the four areas in the District, this service delivery option was not available at all schools. The feeder principal explained that the process by which decisions were made regarding if a student would be appropriate for the SCA classroom setting misaligned with what it was supposed to be. The relational power of the district personnel who at times, made decisions about placement of children in SCAs was done so with disregard for input from school level personnel. Though this principal continually advocated for the students, and highly regarded the teachers’ opinions, she found tension when the all-too-frequent situations arose where district people intervened. Anderson (2009) explained that this type of principal would be considered an advocacy leader because she is “part of a broader struggle…making tactical and ideological calculations…to make sense of the dilemmas and contradictions” (p. 173). This principal explained further that:

Within sometimes a couple of months, sometimes it was after a year of getting to know them (children in the SCAs), but we would have them out in basic classrooms. They would be, for all intents and purposes, the definition of inclusion. They were not in our self-contained classrooms all year long or all day long…

Attempts of this principal to rupture the feeder pattern structure or more specifically the self-contained academic classroom illuminates the contingency of discursive practices in addition to
the disciplinary power that is sustained through normalized practices and rationality. She addressed these power issues (i.e. district personnel and other principals in the feeder pattern) by re-fashioning how self-contained academic classrooms worked at her school and subsequently disrupting how this classroom setting functions in a continuum of services structure.

**The Academic Achievement Frame**

Special education policies, procedures, and practices in the District are a certain way for particular reasons. For example, the decision made by the superintendent’s staff to conduct a pilot study that focused on the disbanding of self-contained academic classes (SCA) was because of the discrepancy in the achievement data from previous years. The ESE Supervisor utilized student data from the state’s standardized test (i.e., FCAT) to ascertain how the students in SCA’s were performing compared to students who were receiving supports in the regular classroom.

We had 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade that we looked at (data). These are all the kids that are self-contained that are pursuing regular standards…and then we pulled all the kids in basic (classroom) who are not self-contained excluding speech only kids, and then all the kids who are in basic. So (we) can see that our self-contained population are doing poor…we needed to change what we're doing with that population of kids.

In other words, the impetus to remove children from a self-contained academic classroom and into the regular classroom was a result of their poor performance on a state standardized assessment, which was referred to by district personnel involved in the pilot study, as the compelling why. Inclusion discussion within this pilot study, then, is driven around the children in SCAs making performance gains on regular standards, as determined through a state mandated
assessment. Understanding inclusion in this way is consistent with Winzer’s (2009) description of selective inclusionists. This means only particular students with disabilities are included for specific purposes. In this case, this purpose is to increase performance on the state assessment.

**Language Shapes Perception.** District administrators and other central office personnel shape ways of thinking and acting through social dynamics in formal and informal meetings and language in texts (i.e. emails, letters, and presentation documents) which produces and regulates a certain way of doing things. The content of these relations are not impartial; “it is value-laden and serves to shape thinking and behavior in particular ways and toward particular ends” (Smylie & Evans, 2006, p. 193). When the ESE Director states that some children belong in the regular education classroom and others, who require more intensive services do not, a correlative understanding of disability and inclusion is disseminated.

So, I do have personal beliefs like, those self-contained academic language impaired and learning disabled kids need to be in Gen. Ed…And those students, some do have autism, some have behavioral concerns, that's kind of where you personalize it for those kids about what can they handle… I think all kids could have some form of access even if it's not even for academics, if it's for electives, if it's for lunch time, if it's for after school opportunities, peer supports, those types of things.

The ESE Director’s leadership role and her beliefs create an opportunity for the knowledge of essentializing differences via disabling categories to be maintained and circulated throughout the district and furthermore, for policies and practices to be created and implemented on the basis of this knowledge. Here is an example of how this assumption of understanding inclusion through differences in disability shapes the rationale behind the development of the self-contained academic classrooms in the District. The area superintendent explains,
Over the years, we’ve had different programs, different structures to address the needs of what would be the neediest children in our schools. Of course, we have self-contain programs for things like autism, for kids who have mental handicap or low developmental abilities. Also, things like emotionally behaviorally disturbed, we have those programs that deal with those specific categories. But over the years, when you have a student who doesn’t fit one of those categories but they’re extremely poor in their achievement. So they don’t have major behavior problems. They’re not really classified as autistic or some other categories, psychological category but they really perform poorly in the schools. We create what was called a self-contained academic program. There was a rather strong gatekeeping of that program. Over time we track that data and once kids went to the self-contained academic, they never came out, and their scores never really improved. The gap that basically they went in with just got maintained. Then, over time, those programs became more … they grew and they became, I think, dumping grounds too.

This district only had children with particular disability categorizations not others (i.e., not those with emotional disturbance, intellectual disabilities, or on the autism spectrum), in these classrooms. Using the “psychological” categories as classifying markers used to place students in particular classroom environments on the continuum of services is grounded in the medical model (Shakespeare, 2014). Language through discourse shapes perception. This shaping happens subtly through power/knowledge relations. When children are categorized based upon individual variance, “We not only make difference visible but work to maintain power imbalances and structural inequity by reifying unnamed attributes,” (Graham & Slee, 2013, p. 287) which are disciplined through cultural, social, and political spaces.
Implementation Concerns. A district-based reform focused on inclusion is a political act. Resources, time, personnel, and financial allocations and commitments are needed for development of procedures and practices as well as for implementation. The inconsistencies shared by participants that related to whether or not the inclusion work is a district initiative created issues because of the lack of deliberate efforts by upper level district leaders (i.e., the powers-that-be). The ESE Supervisor explained why she believes that the inclusion work in the district is not an initiative:

I think we could make it happen if it was a district priority but I don't believe that it is a district priority as of now, and so our money is in our time and our effort and all of that is towards what the higher-ups believe are our district priorities and inclusion is not one of them.

This awareness of not providing enough of the resources (money) to fully support the inclusion work is evidenced, according to the ESE Supervisor, that it is not an initiative. This caused issues related to providing the support that schools and teachers needed in the inclusion pilot study. The area superintendent shared similar sentiments:

…talking as a district, I would say there is not a strong vision in terms of is this a huge priority? Do we, as a district, clearly understand the path that we’re on? I would have to say that’s maybe to no. Only because what we’re doing right now is being driven by the area superintendents.

In the District, the priority at the superintendent level is not one of inclusion, as described in this study. By not providing the adequate supports to those who are charged with implementation, as would be done if this was a district initiative, the relations of power were maintained that are
emblematic of the hierarchical power dynamic situated in this district. Though districts are integral to reforming policies, they may fail to provide the supports needed and impede successful implementation (Honig & Venkateswaran, 2012). This is evidenced in this study. Here the ESE Supervisor shared a comparison of how the inclusion work is different from a current district initiative, MTSS:

I think that with inclusion, there are pockets of people that are talking about it but it's not widespread across all of the District leaders. That's how I would determine that it isn't a District initiative. I think a way to make it a District initiative is exactly like we're doing with MTSS and bringing all of the stakeholders together and having conversations around it. Then, having conversations around how best to roll it out.

The missing stakeholders in the inclusion conversations are from the highest level, the superintendent’s office. Though these individuals are not active participants in the conversation regarding the inclusion work, undertaking the pilot study with the intention from the onset that it would lead to scaling up may then be considered an initiative. There is confusion about this decision to scale up without deliberate efforts that demonstrate the inclusion work is an initiative. The area superintendent explained, “We very much want to scale it up. Perhaps this will be two years from now across the whole County.” Furthermore, the ESE Director shared,

…we talked actually, last week about (how) we can't do this feeder pattern by feeder pattern because we won’t be done in 10 years. You know, it will take us forever. So, like for 15-16, we did one feeder pattern. For 16-17, next year, we're going to do another feeder pattern. And then, we're going to try to scale up at a faster rate as a district. And so, during 16-17, next year, we want to start building the capacity of all the elementary schools with training.
The plan is to completely disband all SCA’s by the 2018-2019 school year. One of the principals shared her concern about this quick timeline to scale up, “I don’t think that one year as a pilot is long enough to make determinations. We’ve only done it for one year! I think (in the District) we jump on things too quickly and they fail.” This principal understands that time is needed to determine if the pilot study is working. Moving so quickly will be a detriment to the schools, the children, and the District. The construction of inclusion as a technical process that can be scaled up within a couple of years rather than a cultural restructuring (Slee, 2001), shapes this work as a mechanistic procedure to move children with particular disability categorizations from a self-contained academic classroom to a regular class in order to improve their academic performance on a state-wide standardized assessment.

**Specialists and Professionalized Knowledge**

The professionalized knowledge of special education is pervasive, as evidenced in the professional development trainings that are provided to the schools in the pilot study, in the information provided on the District’s wiki site on inclusion, and during observations of the meetings about how to support schools, teachers, and students. These specialists espoused an understanding of inclusion grounded in ability differences that shape the District’s institutional policies, procedures, and practices. In the district, the reason to do inclusion is to improve the achievement gap between the children in self-contained academic classrooms and those in the regular classroom; this reason has remained stable from a historical and current standpoint. The pendulum swing, which the ESE Supervisor referenced, is a historical account of previous efforts of inclusion to address an academic performance gap.

…probably 8 to 10 years ago, we had self-contained classes at every Elementary School and we were like No, no we're not doing this anymore. So we went through a similar
process of inclusion to really look at the needs of our district. We looked at our data and saw the achievement gaps between students in self-contained and students in Gen Ed, and the barriers that the self-contained teachers were experiencing with trying to teach the curriculum across students that were significantly delayed and across multiple grade levels.

Placing students in the regular education classrooms, to access the standard curriculum that meet the state standards, is the reason for disbanding the SCA’s. Moreover previous efforts to address the achievement gap of children with disabilities is reminiscent of current efforts. That’s the pendulum swing in the district around inclusion…but it is inclusion designed for a selective group of students (i.e. determined by ability differences) and for the purpose of improving standardized achievement. One assistant principal explained that, “everything we do is towards the regular standards. So standards make a difference.” Underperformance is the indicator used by the District to make decisions that particular children, those in SCA’s, need to be included in the regular education classroom. As explained earlier, the children with disabilities in SCA’s had particular disability categorizations attached to them.

**Knowledge of Principals.** The push to make achievement gains with children with disabilities in conjunction with increasing inclusive efforts is not uncommon (DeMatthews, 2015) in school districts. The ESE Director in this study, explained that a roadblock to making gains is that principals who are not exposed to children with differing disabilities, and the varying service delivery options through the continuum of services, are unprepared to understand the complexities of educating children with disabilities.

I see the most effective principal would be at a school for some period of time as an assistant principal with students with significant disabilities before you become a
principal. So, I was talking to the principal the other day, who was the principal in an elementary school and had students with emotional behavioral disabilities. And then, he moved to be an assistant principal at a middle school that had programs for children with autism on access points…So he had experience…he’s like, I learned so much. Every person should do this because it gave me such a huge opportunity to learn and understand different populations of kids but also how the articulation from elementary and middle impacts kiddos and how as a leader I can be more effective. So, if I have a magic wand, like that would be the only way you get to be a principal…you spend time in schools with children with disabilities, with significant disabilities.

The ESE Director shared that principals who have experiences in schools that house different types of service delivery options (which is along the continuum of services) for children with disabilities are at an advantage in relation to providing an inclusive schooling community. One of the principals in the study further explains the knowledge that principals need in order to do inclusion.

I definitely think they need to be familiar with the different service models. I think that's key. I think there needs to be some kind of background understanding of what resource looks like, what support facilitation could look like, even what co-teach looks like.

This principal, who has been an administrator in schools with differing service delivery options, that are delineated based on disability, openly expressed the need to have a better understanding of the options along the continuum. In the District, the undergirding assumption of inclusion is grounded in essentializing differences of disability, and this is represented in the service models within the continuum of service. The normative assumptions found within the bureaucracy of educational organizations such as school districts, configures an understanding of disability and
inclusion that espouses a deficit orientation (Liasidou, 2007). The deficit orientation is grounded in the context that what a student can or cannot do in the regular education classroom (to access the regular standards) shapes the placement of these students in certain types of classrooms.

**Teachers’ Capacities.** Special Education teachers and Regular Education teachers are provided with trainings created by special education professionals at the district level, who utilized information provided by specialists from the state department of education. The professional development materials and trainings address how to increase the achievement performance of the children from the SCA’s through the inclusion pilot study. There is a collaborative training that the district personnel utilizes to explain why and how both regular and special education teachers should work together to support the students. Furthermore, on the District’s website there is a wiki page that addresses inclusion work. One particular section titled, Framework for Inclusion, is focused on the collaborative teaching service delivery models of co-teaching and support facilitation, each of which must have an ESE teacher involved in instructional delivery. Moreover, printed underneath these models are the six approaches to collaborative teaching along with how to focus on planning, effective instruction, and assessment. The knowledge of how to do inclusion is regulated with an understanding that the special education teacher has specialized knowledges and skills. This teacher is instrumental to making inclusion work through the collaborative teaching models. No alternatives are provided in the District’s Framework for Inclusion. The power/knowledge nexus represented here, is constitutive; thus, this specialized knowledge is shaped by and shapes power. One of the district resource teachers explained how regular education teachers’ mindsets may change as a result of this pilot study, along with the importance of the role of the administration.
When we're thinking about our SLD kids, our OHI kids, I think that our basic teacher is now reviewing them as a part of their class and we will figure out how to make this work. I think it's a mind shift and I think that starts from the administration and their mindset of the building and what their expectations are because we've seen a lot of that this year and the growth in the changes that can be made based on administrative philosophies and how they share that with their staff.

Every one of these individuals (i.e., regular education, special education teachers, administrators) produce and regulate an understanding of special education as well as construct and define children into differing disability based upon categorizations that become readily accepted. This happens through the discursive formation of inclusion in the District which is undergirded by an assumption of essentializing ability differences. These individuals are disciplined into this understanding of inclusion and also disciplines others. Foucault (1977) explains, “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (p. 170).

Implications of this Study

The discourses represented in this dissertation normalize a contingent truth. The study unearths an assumption of difference that recognizes disability through pathologizing and categorizing children, and permeates in the discourses of inclusion within the District. The construction of disability categorizations produces and induces a particular knowledge within and among the discourses. These discourses may be competing or complementary and legitimize a certain way of thinking, being, and acting in the District in relation to the inclusion of children with disabilities. This has, in turn, shaped the creation of policies, the establishment of procedures, and the implementation of practices in the District.
This study illuminates the complexity of the multidimensional dynamics surrounding a district leadership team’s understanding within the discursive formation of inclusion. The power relations negotiated within this formation shape decisions that influence policies, procedures, and practices of inclusive education. Researchers and practitioners may gain knowledge about the complexities of the institutional and relational processes involved with district leadership teams and decision making and the subsequent enactment and implementation of policies and practices. This work enhances the field’s knowledge about why inclusive education is a persisting conundrum and open up pathways for further exploration.

**Curious Tensions**

There were particular tensions that surfaced during this study. These tensions are part of the complexity of understanding inclusion and embedded in the discourses found in the District. The District is a broken system is a sentiment shared by participants who expressed that principals’ autonomy was problematic and led to further issues with regard to inclusion of children in the pilot study. For example, the intention of the District’s current MTSS initiative is to provide structural consensus throughout the schools, however, there has not been cohesion in what this looks like because principals have exercised their autonomy and have implemented MTSS structures in different ways. The ESE District Resource Teacher explains, “Everybody knows they’re supposed to do MTSS, everybody knows that there should be ESE supports but everybody gets to choose the way they wish to do it at their school.” ESE supports are supposed to be provided within the MTSS framework, but without consensus of what this should like in every school in the District, then it becomes problematic for children, especially those in the pilot inclusion study. Some children may get the supports in one school, whereas other children in a different school may not get what they need.
Further, principals in this study shared of their reliance on the district to inform them about what they need to know regarding federal and state laws and its implications for their practice. For instance, there are structures that come out of federal policy like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. These are interpreted by the state and the district. Though principals depend on the District to tell them what they need to know based on their interpretation some expressed wanting to learn more about the laws and the varying service delivery options. The ESE Director emphatically shared that principals should be prepared with this type of knowledge and experiences prior to attaining a school-based administrator position.

Another tension lies in the compelling why, the reasoning to do the pilot inclusion study. Clearly stated is that there is an achievement gap among the children in the SCAs and those in the regular classroom based on students’ scores on the state’s standardized achievement test (FCAT). The children with disabilities in the SCA classrooms are all at least two years below grade level achievement-wise; this is the criteria for being placed in the SCA classroom. None of the participants shared why this was the determining factor for being in an SCA classroom but did explain that this classroom is only for children with substantial academic deficits, not for those with behavioral issues, or those on access points.

There is a technical process here where particular children with disabilities have access to the SCA classroom (based on academic performance) and others do not (based on other factors such as behavior or cognitive ability). A barrier then, would be that this technical imperative that places certain children in SCAs and subsequently, as a result of the pilot inclusion study, moves them to the regular education classroom, has a stronghold on how inclusion is discursively thought about and acted upon in the District. These technical processes influence understanding and decision making with regard to inclusionary practices. Through discourse, the technical
imperatives shape district and school leaders’ ethics and consequently their decision making about the policies, procedures, and practices in the District.

**Implications for Research**

As shared in this study, inclusion perpetuates exclusion. Policies, procedures and practices are evident in the district that provided opportunities for segregation of children with disabilities through the appearance of disbanding self-contained classrooms. Further studies could interrogate this unsettling paradox and the reconceptualization of inclusive education. Sapon-Shevin (2007) and Slee (2001) call for a radical restructuring of educational systems, which is another space that can be further explored addressing the ethical, political, and pragmatic constrictions which may be hindrances.

Undertaking a Foucauldian analysis undergirded by a poststructural epistemological frame provided spaces to question assumptions and uncover how thinking and behavior are produced and disciplined through the subtlety of the dynamics of power/knowledge relations. This type of analysis can be used to further explore the assumptions of inclusion and how these assumptions shape the policies and practices in districts in Florida or in other states. Adding another layer of participants (i.e., teachers, parents, students, principals) may add to the complexity of the relations and may provide a nuanced and deeper understanding of the creation of policy and the implementation of practices from a variety of perspectives.

This study illuminated the complexity involved in inclusive education through the exploration of the discourses of inclusion of a district leadership team. Research with central office administrators focused on inclusion of children with disabilities is minimal and this dissertation addressed an area where a substantial gap exists. As a result, further areas of
research can be explored. The study has implications for research utilizing the same methodology of this study. Discourse analysis studies open up spaces of exploration that other types of studies do not. In this study using this methodological frame allowed for the investigation into the underlying assumption of inclusion of children with disabilities. Further, the assumption of essentializing ability differences were found to shape the policies, procedures, and practices with regard to disbanding the self-contained academic classrooms in the District. Engaging in similar types of studies will move forward the knowledge about the complexities involved in district-driven pilot studies or related work.

Since discourses structure a particular way of thinking and acting contained in a particular historical moment, the findings of this study suggest that these are contingent upon the structuring of the discourses entangled within sociopolitical and cultural contextual constraints. Further studies that address the differing or similar discourses reported in this study can address the nuances involved in the assumptions and understanding of inclusion. Since “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (Foucault, 1990, p. 100), then it is through discourses that certain power/knowledge relations are legitimized and certain regimes of truths are normalized. Additionally, research that heavily focuses on the relational power of district administrators and building administrators may enlighten thinking about the importance of focusing on this relational dynamic.

Honig (2012) studied the relationship between central office administrators and their roles in supporting principal development. The knowledge base using this type of study is scarce. Utilizing a similar study to Honig (2012) as an extension of this study, may inform the research that focuses on district systems that emphasize making substantial systemic changes. In this study, the discourses of inclusion are grounded in an assumption that systemically shapes the
thinking and actions related to children with disabilities. Perhaps, a study about fundamentally re-envisioning inclusion education for children with disabilities will be informative to those district level administrators who would like to explore alternate approaches to doing inclusion in districts and schools. Moreover, a key component of this type of investigative study would be to address how disability categorizations are problematic, as found in this study, and re-think those categorizations or utility of them.

Structures and modes of thinking regulate and standardize policies and practices in institutions. The collective understandings of the district as institutions and the politics behind how these collective understandings are organized is an area to learn more about especially with an emphasis on inclusion. In this study, the participants agreed that the inclusion work is not a district initiative. Continuing along this path, studies that address the politics and the decision-making processes at the district level will provide fruitful knowledge to researchers. Malen (2006) states, “The overarching analytic challenge is to get at the reciprocal relationship between politics and policy” (p. 85). Moreover, a poststructural policy analysis, described as a process of bricolage (Anderson, 2009), may be warranted to understand Malen’s analytic challenge. This type of policy analysis will engage thinking and research in spaces not usually explored.

The findings of this study showed that the reasoning to do the inclusion pilot study was to address the achievement gap between children in self-contained academic classrooms and those included in the regular education classroom. Research is needed that addresses how accountability of school districts is focused upon academic achievement, which can have detrimental effects on children of marginalized populations, such as the placement of children with particular disability categorizations in the regular classroom, as found in this study. Further, how does this academic achievement frame the policies, procedures, and practices in
districts with equity-oriented focused. The work of Rorrer, Skrla, and Scheurich (2008) focused on district reform and provides a framework for addressing districts as institutional actors. This type of framework can be used to study how districts with an equity focus with inclusion as an emphasis, negotiate the tensions that arise when trying to fundamentally change systems.

**Implications for Practice**

In this study, principals’ knowledge of the differing service delivery options was problematic. The ESE Director shared concerns that principals are not adequately prepared in their principal preparation programs because of this lack of knowledge and experiences. Principals who had experience working in schools with different clusters of children in segregated classrooms felt better prepared to do the inclusion work, as outlined in the pilot study. Since the continuum of service models is used throughout the district, it may be helpful if district personnel or administrators find ways for principals to garner further knowledge about children with differing disabilities. Moreover, how can the district build the capacity of principals to lead schools, focused on inclusion as explained in the findings of the District, in ways that can enhance the learning and improvement of children with disabilities?

There were school based administrators in this study, who espouse beliefs about including children, other than those focused upon for achievement gains (specifically who fall within SLD and Language Impaired categorizations). These administrators focused on how the school was structured to meet the varying needs of children with more cognitive or severe disabilities (i.e. ASD, ED, InD, etc.). Engaging in discussions with these school based administrators, with colleagues or district level personnel, may inform the inclusion work of children other than those focused upon to make achievement gains. An examination of the
contradictions found in this study may further open up pathways to find alternatives to making inclusion work in the District.

How can the specialized knowledges and skills that special education teachers have be disseminated to all teachers? This can be explored further in the district along with delineating that the responsibilities of educating children with disabilities is the responsibility of all. What specific pedagogical devices and curricula approaches can be used to address the needs of children with disabilities and how are those shaped by a particular understanding of inclusion? How can the district be explicit in support and understanding of whole-school structures such as MTSS? What can be done to address school-based administrators understanding of this structural framework? These types of questions warrant deliberate efforts by district level administrators to directly address some of the areas that need further development as well as how current practices are contributory to the broken system as explained by participants.

There were at times miscommunication between district personnel, and between district and school principals. The district can conceptualize ways to communicate with personnel and building principals that build positive relationships instead of ones, where the district people only come into schools to place a student without any input from the school staff. This was found to be a major issue as part of the district-is-broken framing, shared by the principal of the feeder school in the study. Figuring out ways to build meaningful and mutually respectful relationships will make for more productive relationships.

The achievement gap is an urgent focus of the district, as explained in the study’s findings, and particularly focused on children with disabilities. Thinking about the context of the District, how can this gap be addressed in ways that do not take away from providing quality education for all children, including those with severe disabilities? This population of students
need addressing, according to the most recent BPIE. Due to the focus on achievement, as referred to in the District as the compelling why, participants in this study shared concerns with the timeline for scaling up the inclusion work and the disbanding of the self-contained academic classrooms. Discussions are needed surrounding the implications of scaling up so quickly and the actions or steps that can be taken to ensure that the scaling up will work and not revert back to self-contained environments.

**Researcher’s End Note**

From the onset of this study I sought to explore the discourses of inclusion and the underlying tensions that make inclusion work from a district stance problematic. My decision to do this study through a poststructural frame is twofold: to forefront the uncontested assumptions that undergird understandings of disability and inclusion and to illuminate how these assumptions shaped the policies, procedures, and practices within a district through the power/knowledge nexus and disciplinary power. Through this dissertation I hope to have addressed the discourses of inclusion as Foucault (1972) explained:

> What we must do, in fact, is to tear away from them their virtual self-evidence, and to free the problems that they pose; to recognize that they are not the tranquil locus on the basis of which other questions…may be posed, but that they themselves pose a whole cluster of questions. (p. 26)

Presented in this dissertation is a description and critique of the discourses of inclusion. The unquestioned normative understanding of the need for the continuum of segregating spaces, the utility of the academic achievement frame, and necessity of the expertise of specialists and
professionalized knowledge are imbued discursively in the district’s policies, procedures, and practices regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Every decision made in the undertaking of this study happened through my lens. The interpretations that are shared are contingent in this moment shaped by the cultural, political, social, and historical contexts at this time. Foucault states, “…interpretation does not clarify a matter to be interpreted…it can only seize an already-present interpretation, which it must overthrow” (cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 969). Through this interpretation I discussed how disability is understood through categorizing and pathologizing children, creating a chasm between disability and normality. I explained how the continuum of services are segregating spaces that may be stigmatizing for marginalized children. Lastly, I addressed how the substantiation of professionalized knowledges and the roles of specialists normalize deficit thinking and shape the dynamics of implementation.

How Has This Study Shaped My Thinking?

At the beginning of chapter 1, I shared my experiences of being a special education teacher who worked in inclusive settings. The experiences and knowledge garnered from being a varying exceptionalities teacher shaped my thinking at the onset of this study, and continued to do so throughout. While my teacher perspective illuminated an understanding of inclusion that I was disciplined into, it also allowed me to problematize this understanding. For instance, one area that have been problematic is the language used to describe people with disabilities. In the United States, people-first language is used when referring to someone with a disabilities (e.g., a child with autism instead of an autistic child). I used people-first language as a special education teacher. However, as I learned about the different conceptualizations of disability---medical model, social model, cultural model (Berger, 2013)---during my development as a doctoral
student, I realized there is much more complexity involved in how people who are construed to have a disability are talked about/or referred to. There are times when I have referred to someone with a disability as a “disabled person” but only doing so with the understanding that aligns with the social model of disability which states that people are disabled by societal norms and barriers. There is a tension that lies with me surrounding the language used to describe someone with a disability. I use both people-first language but do not refrain from using language that connotes people are also disabled by society.

The researcher’s perspective opened up areas that can be explored through a non-traditional qualitative study. Using the poststructural frame to undergird the discourse analysis approach I selected deepened my understanding of the interrelational dynamics between district and school administrators, as they focused on inclusion work. The dilemmas and the contradictions that were shared in this study complicated the processes and practices of the pilot study. I believe that this complexity needs to be further explored through non-traditional type of research that can engage alternative and radical thinking.

My thinking about research and practice has been shaped tremendously as a result of participating in this study. As the researcher, I made decisions that directed the trajectory of the study in spaces of complications (that were both intentional and unintentional). I am the conduit through which all aspects of this study passed. This study was shaped by me and shaped me. My role as the researcher was one of being engaged completely with the data, the analysis and the writing of the dissertation. Utilizing the poststructural approach was instrumental to the undertaking of this role.
References


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*Exceptional Children, 35*, 5-22.


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Florida Department of Education (2016). *Least restrictive environment considerations related to individual educational plans.* Retrieved from


Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1401 *et seq.*


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Sacramento City School District v. Holland, 14 F.3d 1398 (9th Cir. 1994).


Appendix A
Letter to ESE Directors

January 7, 2015
University of South Florida
IRB Study #

To District Leadership Personnel,

I am a Ph. D. candidate at the University of South Florida in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. I am undertaking a dissertation study about ESE directors’ and related district personnel’s understanding of inclusive education of children with disabilities and how these individuals and their participation in leadership teams shape the policies, processes, and procedures of inclusion discursively.

Participants who meet the following requirements qualify to participate in this study, (a) current ESE Directors or related leadership team members in local school districts, (b) in this position for at least 3 years, and (c) engaged in a deliberate emphasis focused on inclusive education.

Your role as an ESE director or district leadership personnel is significant because of the impact your decisions have on special education policies, procedures, and processes in the district which ultimately affect children and families. I would like to learn more about you and your participation in leadership teams that are focused on inclusive education in your school district.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at 813-293-1128 or email at karen1@mail.usf.edu. A follow up email will be sent in 2 weeks as well. Please review the attached informed consent form.

Thank you for your consideration.

Karen Ramlackhan
Appendix B
Sample Observational Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflexive Notes</th>
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</thead>
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</table>
Appendix C

Questions or Guiding Statements

Study: The Elusiveness of Inclusiveness

Principal Investigator: Karen Ramlackhan

IRB Study #

- The participants’ answers will guide the direction of the interview. Additional questions will be asked as a result.

1. Tell me about being an ESE Director (or the title of the position the person being interviewed holds).

2. Let’s discuss your road to this district level position.

3. What do you have planned for ESE in this district for the next 5 years? 10 years?

4. Talk about the special education policies, procedures, and practices within this district.

5. What is inclusion? What does it mean to you?

6. How is inclusion enacted in your district?

7. What is your relationship with stakeholders (district leaders, principals, community partners, etc.)?

8. Talk about challenges you encounter. Successes?

9. Would you like to add anything else to our discussion today?
Appendix D
Informed Consent

Information about Study

The Elusiveness of Inclusiveness

Principal Investigator: Karen Ramlackhan

Study #

Project Description:

I am undertaking a dissertation study about ESE directors’ and leadership team members’ understanding of inclusive education of children with disabilities and how these individuals shape the policies, processes, and procedures of inclusion discursively. This study is expected to last from spring 2016 to summer 2016.

Procedure:

Interviews of approximately one hour in length will be conducted, and each participant will be interviewed 1-4 times individually at a location selected by the participant. I will record the interview only with your written consent and will ensure that no personal identifiers will be used to protect your anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used. You are free to say as much or as little as you want during the interview. You can decide not to answer any question or to stop the interview any time. Participation in this study is totally voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Withdrawal from the study will not result in any penalty.
The tapes and transcripts will become my property. The recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer for eight years. Your identity will be concealed in any research publications written from the interviews.

**Risks:**

There is a possibility that a participant may experience some emotional discomfort or feel uncomfortable during the interview process when sharing their thoughts and experiences about inclusion of children with disabilities.

**Benefits:**

The results of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge about ESE directors’ and leadership teams’ perspectives and experiences about the inclusion of children with disabilities.

**Cost Compensation:**

Participation in this study will involve no costs to you. You will receive no remuneration for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

All information collected during the study period will be kept strictly confidential. No publications or reports from this project will include identifying information on any participant without your signed permission. If you agree to join this study, please sign your name on the following page.
I, ________________________________, agree to be interviewed for the project titled, “Elusiveness of Inclusiveness,” created by Karen Ramlackhan, a doctoral candidate at the University of South Florida.

I declare that I have been informed about the confidentiality of information collected for this project and the anonymity of my participation. I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more electronically recorded interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be result in research publications.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

________________________________________  Date ______________________
Signature of Interviewee

________________________________________  Date ______________________
Signature of Interviewer
Appendix E

List of Participants

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### Appendix F

### Meetings Attended

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### Appendix G

**Participants’ Interviews**

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Appendix H

IRB Approval Letter

March 17, 2016

Karen Ramlauchan
L-CACHE - Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career & Higher Education
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00025401
Title: The Elusiveness of Inclusiveness: A Discourse Analysis on the Discursive Formation of Inclusion of a District Level ESE Leadership Team

Study Approval Period: 3/17/2016 to 3/17/2017

Dear Ms. Ramlauchan:

On 3/17/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
USF IRB Protocol Version 1.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
USF consent form IRB official.docx pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:
(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board