THE COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EARLY LITERACY CURRICULUM IN A FULL-INCLUSION PRIMARY GRADE CLASSROOM: CO-TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WORKING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH LITERACY GOALS

By

Kathi Louise Tarrant

ABSTRACT

THE COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EARLY LITERACY CURRICULUM IN A FULL-INCLUSION PRIMARY GRADE CLASSROOM: CO-TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WORKING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH LITERACY GOALS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the collaborative implementation of an early literacy curriculum in a full-inclusion primary grade classroom comprised of students with mild disabilities and their general education peers. The curriculum, known as the Early Literacy Project (ELP) curriculum (Englert, Garmon, Mariage, Rozendal, Tarrant, & Urba, 1995), encompassed an integrated, curricular approach to literacy instruction guided by the enactment of literacy principles informed by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, Wertch, 1991).

The inclusion classroom under study was co-taught by a general education and special education teacher. The study sought to examine four questions about the process of inclusion, co-teaching, and the implementation of the ELP curriculum that addressed, (a) how the co-teachers negotiated their instructional roles in the context of full-inclusion, (b) how the co-teachers enacted the literacy principles and activities of the ELP curriculum, (c) how special

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education students negotiated their roles as learners in inclusion process, and (d) special education students' performance and participation in the literacy community across the school year.

The collaborative implementation of the ELP curriculum was examined from a descriptive analytical approach. Data sources included: (a) fieldnotes from direct observations of the classroom, (b) transcribed audio- and video-tapes of literacy activity in the classroom, (c) informal interviews and conversations with the teachers and students, (d) students' pre and post assessments in reading, (e) classroom artifacts, and (f) personal reflections recorded after classroom observations.

This study extends the research on inclusion by examining questions about the process of general and special educators' negotiation of literacy principles that informed and shaped their co-enactment of an integrated literacy curriculum designed to enhance the reading and writing performance of students with mild disabilities. Further, the study provides important implications regarding the potential for a co-teaching model to bring about important changes in the general education literacy curriculum and to help special and general education teachers begin to define what it means to teach in more inclusive ways.

Dedicated with love
to my children,

Jeremy David and Andrea Kathryn.

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Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of several people. I would like to acknowledge those special individuals here and thank them for their invaluable contributions to this process.

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My children, Jeremy and Andrea, could probably recite sections of this dissertation from memory since they spent so many hours listening patiently as I read things back to myself at the computer. They have really been troopers through the entire process of living with a mom who went back to graduate school. As a family, we have all learned so many important lessons during this process. Thank you, Jeremy, for reminding me always that we have to follow our hearts. Thank you, Andrea, for showing me the true meaning of persistence, even when things seemed so incredibly uncertain.

I am also deeply grateful for my husband's unwavering support. You were so brave to marry a woman in the middle of her dissertation. Thank you, Larry, from the bottom of my heart, for traveling the 'long and winding road' and bringing me back home so I could finish this important project.

And, finally, *Diolch I Dduw*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, concerns about the effectiveness of special education programs resulted in increased efforts to re-examine the instructional practices in special education classrooms, particularly those classrooms serving students with mild disabilities (learning disabilities and emotional impairments). Several studies of special education instruction have yielded findings that suggest that the special education curriculum is often an over-simplified version of the general education curriculum and that special education practices have not been implemented in ways that fully address the individualized needs of students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm 1995). Moreover, a large body of research on special education practices suggests that the special education curriculum, with its strong emphasis on basic skills acquisition, does not provide students with the kinds of strategic knowledge that fosters higher-order learning and problem-solving (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1990; Allington, 1991; Wesson & Deno, 1986; Poplin & Stone, 1992; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986). Further, special education students who receive a portion of their instruction in the general education classroom and are then pulled out for special education services, often miss out on critical content in the general education class (Allington, 1991; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989b; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Mecklenburg, & Graden, 1984). Consequently, this disjointed experience of school curriculum further compromises learning opportunities for challenged students and often prevents special education students from meaningfully connecting with and contributing to the classroom community.

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Special Education Reform

The growing concern regarding the effectiveness of special education practices has provoked several efforts to restructure existing special education programs. Advocates of special education reform have proposed changes that range from the total elimination of special education's continuum of services, to the modification of the existing continuum by eliminating just the bottom and near-top of the continuum (i.e., resource services and self-contained programs) that typically exist in public school settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). As the national debate over school restructuring and special education reform continues, several efforts at the local level have begun to take shape. One response has been an increased effort on the part of local school districts to reduce the number of special education referrals. To do this, many districts have become more rigorous in their efforts to develop prereferral intervention plans for students who, according to their classroom teachers, are at risk for school failure. Before any consideration is given to a possible special education referral, school intervention teams work collaboratively to develop specific plans to help the classroom teacher work with potentially at-risk students within the context of the general classroom (Pugach & Johnson, 1989).

Another effort underway as part of the special education reform agenda involves more inclusive instructional arrangements for students with disabilities. Local districts across the nation have begun to implement inclusive school programs where special education students receive their instruction in the general education classroom on a full-time basis (Pugach, 1995; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998; Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Baker, 1995; Jenkins, Jewell, Leicester, Jenkins, & Troutner, 1991; Deno, Maruyama, Espin, & Cohen, 1990; Wang & Zollers, 1990). While some districts are in the initial implementation stages of inclusion, other districts are finding the task of wide spread adoption

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more challenging because of a number of contributing factors, including: (1) lack of resources (materials, equipment, personnel) to address the identified needs of special education students in the general classroom, (2) lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the general classroom teacher, (3) lack of time for special and general educators to collaborate, and (4) special education students' lack of preparation for negotiating the mainstream curriculum (Pugach, 1995; Gersten & Woodward, 1990; Gerber, 1995; Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Tarrant, 1993; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994).

Inclusion and Students with Mild Disabilities

In light of the documented shortcomings in special education practices, it is critical that we continue to explore ways to restructure special education programs and services in order to provide a meaningful school experience for all students. Inasmuch as the current move to fully integrate special education students into the mainstream of general education might be a starting point for needed changes in the way we organize schools and classrooms around the diverse needs of students, we cannot expect that the mere, and rather sudden shifts in responsibility from the special education to the general education community will necessarily produce successful outcomes for students with disabilities. The research literature on inclusion documents few studies where students with mild disabilities have made achievement gains as the result of placement in full inclusion classrooms (Martin, 1995; Pugach, 1995). In fact, some studies report that even when best practices such as cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring are implemented in general education classrooms serving remedial students and students with mild disabilities, these practices have had limited impact on low-achieving students. (Jenkins et al.,1991). Further, findings from studies examining the effects of full inclusion on students with learning

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disabilities might suggest an equally grim picture. In a large-scale study conducted by Zigmond and Baker (1992), the researchers found that 50% of the students with learning disabilities who were included full-time in general education classes did not make academic gains. Relatedly, in their set of published case studies conducted in five elementary schools in various states across the country, Zigmond and Baker (1995) found that students with learning disabilities who were placed in full inclusion classrooms generally did not receive the kinds of curricular adaptations and modifications that might have otherwise helped them to successfully negotiate the mainstream curriculum. While this particular set of case studies did not involve a quantitative analysis of student achievement, the general findings revealed that the overall experiences for students with learning disabilities in the inclusion settings did not reflect supported instructional conditions.

To date, the research findings on the effects of inclusion on students with mild disabilities underscore two of the most frequently cited criticisms of the inclusion movement. First, many critics of inclusion argue that there has been little consideration given to teacher preparation and the knowledge and skills necessary to responsibly manage the full inclusion of students with mild disabilities. While many advocates of special education reform have called for the merger of special education and general education resources, discussions surrounding these broad policy issues have not considered how the blending of special and general education resources might be accomplished given the everyday realities of classroom teaching (Gersten & Woodward, 1990). Second, some critics argue that wide-spread adoption of inclusion programs must be preceded by more rigorous assessment of learning outcomes (Kaufman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Murphy, 1995). The Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) agrees, stating that while some students with LD may indeed benefit from

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placement in inclusive classrooms, the general education setting may not be the most appropriate setting for students whose instructional needs are more intense (LDA, 1993).

The Impact of Inclusion on Teachers' Literacy Practices

The majority of students qualifying for special education services under the broad category of mild disabilities are those students who typically fall well below achievement standards in reading and writing. Yet, in much of the research literature documenting the effects of inclusion on students with mild disabilities, few studies have explored the potential impact of inclusion from the perspective of teachers' instructional practices in literacy. While several studies measuring the effects of inclusion on students with mild disabilities use reading achievement as the primary measure of success (Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Jenkins et al., 1991; Deno et al., 1990), little attention has been given to the overall literacy curriculum in general education and how inclusion teachers carry out the various components of reading and writing instruction. A responsible examination of inclusion programs not only involves more rigorous assessment of student outcomes, it also requires us to look closely at how inclusion teachers alter their instructional practices in response to the wider range of student capability. Presumably, to return special education students to classrooms that offer few instructional supports is to recreate a setting for expected failure. Zigmond and Baker (1990) caution us to consider the effects of inclusion on students with learning disabilities if general education teachers, in their attempts to respond to the multiple challenges of inclusion, return to "business as usual" (p. 185). Research on the effects of inclusion on students with mild disabilities must consider the extent to which teachers are willing to change their existing

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practices if those practices are not addressing the needs of all students in the classroom (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Pugach, 1995; Zigmond & Baker, 1995).

What this body of literature calls into question involves two issues that directly impact the likelihood that inclusion will benefit students with mild disabilities. The first issue involves the preparation of teachers for inclusion; the second issue involves the preparation of students with disabilities for negotiating the rigors of the general education classroom. Preparing students for inclusion involves a supportive framework where students with disabilities can begin to align themselves with new roles as learners, and full participants in the literacy discourse of the general education community.

The Preparation of Teachers for Inclusion

Historically, special education and general education teachers have been reluctant to cross the boundaries that separate them (Skrtic, 1991). Specifically, this has been the case as it relates to issues concerning curriculum and instruction (Pugach, 1985). In an earlier study examining teachers' beliefs about inclusion and the instructional needs of students with mild disabilities (Tarrant, 1993), interview data collected on pairs of special education and general education teachers attempting to co-teach a unit to both general and special education students revealed interesting patterns of discourse between the teachers of the pairs that were studied. Generally, the dialogic interactions between the special and general education teachers who shared students centered around scheduling conflicts and student behavior concerns. Few conversations involved in-depth curriculum issues as they related to the diverse instructional needs of students. Moreover, the analysis of interview data revealed that few special education teachers believed that they had much to offer the general educator in terms of curriculum expertise; similarly, the general

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education teachers seldom sought advice from the special education teachers when it came to decisions about curriculum and instruction. Consequently, many of the co-teaching efforts were short-lived, succumbing to the fact that special and general educators were not yet comfortable with collaborative teaching arrangements that required a renegotiation of their instructional roles. There was however, one exception in the study that may shed some light on the kinds of supports that facilitate collaboration between general and special educators. Underlying the more sustained collaborative activity between one pair of teachers in the study were several factors that fostered the development of their professional partnership: (1) time to collaborate, (2) visibility of each other's instructional practices, (3) support from peers and school administrators, (4) willingness to negotiate new roles, (5) a shared language of instruction, (6) willingness to cross instructional boundaries and take risks, and (7) recognition of success from each other; and from peers and administrators (Tarrant, 1993). As efforts to merge the general and special education communities intensify, it is critical that we begin to identify the conditions necessary to initiate and support working partnerships between general education and special education teachers.

The Preparation of Students for Inclusion

Just as teachers must be provided the necessary levels of support to accomplish their goals, so must students. For many special education students who have been transferred from special education resource and self-contained programs to inclusion settings, the abrupt change in placement has often resulted in little more than special education students occupying space in classrooms that are ill-equipped to address their instructional needs (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Not only has special education often

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failed to prepare students for the transition (Allington, 1991), general education teachers are often reluctant to accept instructional responsibility for students with disabilities (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Consequently, large numbers of special education students sit in general education classrooms, yet are not included as active and contributing members of the classroom community. We may be tempted to call this inclusion, but in most cases it is little more than an unwelcomed shift in responsibility. Unfortunately, if we fail to address the need to prepare both teachers and students for inclusion, we run the risk of experiencing what we did several decades ago when students with disabilities slipped through the cracks of general education (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Pugach, 1995).

Instructional Practices that Show Promise
for Students with Disabilities

Special education students must be prepared for their transition to the mainstream of education through instructional practices that cultivate higher order learning and independence. Special education students must be provided opportunities where they can meaningfully connect with the curriculum, demonstrate their capabilities as learners, and contribute their ideas as valued members of the classroom community (Englert, Tarrant, & Mariage, 1992).

In our efforts to integrate special education and general education, we must, as several critics argue, be held accountable for student outcomes. However, research that focuses exclusively on outcomes, yet fails to address the unique and qualitative features of teachers' instructional interactions and collaborative problem-solving with colleagues does not advance the field in terms of undertanding *how* we might implement successful inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities. A responsible examination of inclusion programs

requires us to pay careful attention to what goes on to produce the outcomes. That is, what are the changes that occur in teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices in response to more diverse classrooms and to greater levels of professional responsibility for students with special needs that influences teacher actions and student outcomes.

Another related factor in the research and development of successful inclusion programs involves an on-going identification of instructional practices that have shown promise for special education students, particularly for those students with mild disabilities. To date, few studies have considered the potential benefits of inclusion when good instruction becomes the focus. However, the extensive work of Englert and her colleagues provides a critical point of departure from traditional special education practices (i.e., basic skills instruction), and describes an integrated curricular approach to literacy instruction that advances the reading and writing performance of students with emergent literacy skills (Englert, Garmon, Mariage, Rozendal, Tarrant, & Urba, 1995). The Early Literacy Project (ELP) encompassed several studies that showcased the effects of an integrated literacy curriculum on the reading and writing achievement of students with mild disabilities. Many students with mild disabilities who participated in the ELP curriculum for two years reached grade level expectations in reading by the end of their second year of instruction (Englert, Mariage, Garmon, & Tarrant, 1998). While the ELP curriculum was initially implemented in special education resource rooms, the research data suggests that the ELP curricular approach shows promise in terms of the kinds of instructional supports that might similarly propel all students' learning in inclusion classrooms.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the potential effectiveness of the ELP curricular approach as it is implemented in a co-taught, full-inclusion elementary classroom comprised of students with and without mild disabilities. The study explores the impact of the ELP curricular approach on two levels. First, at the teacher level, this study examines how the special education teacher and the general education teacher collaborated to implement the ELP curricular approach in a full inclusion elementary classroom. Second, at the student level, the study examines how the ELP curricular approach supported or failed to support students with mild disabilities in a general education inclusion setting.

Research Questions Guiding the Study

This study was conducted to answer four primary questions about the process of inclusion. The first two questions involve participation in the inclusion process at the teacher level and consider issues related to teachers' negotiation of instructional roles, implementation of literacy practices, and opportunities for professional development:

Question One: How do the special education (SE) teacher and the general education (GE) teacher negotiate their roles within the inclusion classroom?

How does the process of co-teaching unfold?

How do the two teachers present themselves to students and parents?

How do students perceive the role of each teacher?

Who takes instructional responsibility for literacy activities and instruction, and how does the responsibility change over time?

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Question Two: In what ways does the SE teacher use her knowledge of literacy principles and instruction for students with mild disabilities to build an instructional partnership with the GE teacher?

How does the collaborative implementation of the ELP curriculum evolve?

How does the SE teacher apprentice the GE teacher in the principles and methods of the ELP curriculum (e.g., scaffolds, ceding control)?

The last two questions guiding the study consider the impact of the ELP curricular approach on students in the inclusion setting:

Question Three: What is the nature of special education (SE) students' and general education (GE) students' participation in the inclusion process?

Are there differences between the participation of SE students and GE students in the inclusion classroom? If so, what is the nature of those differences?

Are there differences between the participation of former ELP students and SE students entering the classroom at later points in the school year? If so, what is the nature of those differences?

Question Four: How do SE students demonstrate their capabilities as readers and writers in the inclusion classroom?

Rationale for the Study

This study will contribute to the research literature on inclusion in several important ways. First, the study will provide information about inclusion from an instructional perspective, specifically focusing on what and how teachers change their instructional practices in response to learners who represent a diverse range of ability in reading and writing. Second, through an on-going examination of how a special educator and a general educator negotiate their instructional roles within the context of a full inclusion classroom, this study will generate insights that may help educators more fully understand how a co-teaching model

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can be an effective means for accomplishing goals for an inclusive educational program. Finally, unlike the current trend to offer general education teachers a simple recipe list for modifying reading and writing assignments for special needs students, this study will shed light on the potential benefits of an integrated curriculur approach to teaching literacy to students with mild disabilities in the general education classroom. In order for students with mild disabilities to benefit from placement in the general education classroom, they must be provided with opportunities to collaboratively participate in a literacy community where teachers' instruction focuses on the strategies for accomplishing higher-order literacy tasks, and where students are supported as they move toward proficiency in reading and writing.

Overview of the Study

This study is designed to better understand the features of instruction and professional collaboration that show potential for creating inclusive school communities. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that helps to establish a framework for understanding what it is that students with disabilities need, and what it is that teachers need in order to successfully negotiate new roles in the school community. This is particularly important because general education and special education have historically functioned as separate systems, with their own unique set of beliefs and practices. (Skrtic, 1991). This institutional separation has denied both parties the opportunity to collaboratively participate in educational decision-making in the interest of *all* children. The end result has been a less than desirable picture of what inclusive education is meant to accomplish.

Chapter Three discusses the organizational features of the study, describing the research method and rationale, the research site and participants,

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the data that were collected to address the research questions guiding the study, and how the data were analyzed.

The results of the study are discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four addresses the first two research questions involving teachers' collaborative participation in the inclusion process. This chapter describes how the teachers implemented a co-teaching model and how the ELP curriculum evolved. Chapter Five presents results as they relate to the last two research questions involving students' participation in the inclusion process, describing the nature of students' engagement with the literacy curriculum, and their interactions with peers and teachers.

The results of the study are followed by a discussion in Chapter Six that presents the researcher's interpretations of the findings and limitations of the study. Chapter Six concludes with implications for future research and practice.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the research that describes the instructional practices that have typically characterized segregated programs for students with special needs, specifically focusing on the perceived failure of special education practices to advance the reading and writing performance of students with mild disabilities. The sections that follow provide a review of the literature on more inclusive arrangements for educating students with mild disabilities in general education settings. The review first reports on the effects of inclusion programs on students with mild disabilities as they relate to reading achievement, as well as the level of accommodation provided to students in general education settings. This is followed by a section that describes various planning models and instructional practices designed to support general education teachers in their instructional planning for students with disabilities.

The next section of the chapter provides a summary that highlights the kinds of supports that teachers need in order to implement successful inclusion programs, as well as what students need in order to benefit from general education placement. The chapter concludes with a discussion of instructional practices that are guided by a set of principles based on social constructivist theory. Central to this discussion is a description of an integrated curricular

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approach to literacy instruction known as the Early Literacy Project (ELP) (Englert et al., 1995). This discussion will highlight several features of the ELP curriculum that showed promise in terms of helping all students achieve literacy goals within the context of general education programs.

Criticisms of Special Education Practices

Over the last decade and a half we have witnessed a growing debate on how we might best serve children with disabilities (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lilly, 1988; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989; and Will, 1986). In part, this debate is fueled by long-held criticisms of the instructional formats and teaching practices that typically characterize segregated programs for special education students (Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Singer & Butler, 1987; Allington & McGill-Franzen 1989; Simpson & Myles, 1990; and George, Morvan, Gersten, & Woodward, 1990). Critics of special education programs argue that these programs have not produced clear evidence that supports the removal of a student from the general education classroom in order to provide remedial instruction (Deno, Marruyama, Espin, & Cohen, 1990; Allington, 1990). Special education pull-out programs typically result in a fragmented learning experience for students, denying many special education students opportunities to meaningfully connect with and contribute to the general classroom community. This is a critical concern, given that the regulations governing special education (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975/P.L. 94-142) are built on the premise that

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special education programs are intended to provide special education students with unique forms of instruction and support services in order to move them toward academic levels that are commensurate with their normally-achieving peers.

In light of the perceived failure of special education programs to discontinue students and return them to the mainstream, special education research over the last several years has focused heavily on the context for learning in special education classrooms. This research has examined the formats for special education instruction (e.g., teachers' instructional interactions and grouping arrangements), as well as the activities in which special education students typically engage. The findings from this body of research show instructional practices in special education settings are typified by an emphasis on recitation formats and by instruction in basic skills that is often isolated from authentic and puposeful contexts (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Brown, Palincsar, & Purcell, 1985; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Wesson & Deno, 1989; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Mecklenburg, & Graden, 1984). Although special education settings are expected to provide students with more frequent and individual instructional contact with teachers, several studies reveal that the instructional arrrangements in special education classes are typically characterized by students spending a substantial portion of time engaged in independent seatwork activities that are either beyond the present cognitive abilities of students or are motivationally unchallenging (Rieth & Frick, 1983; Reith, Bahr, Polsgrove, Okolo, Eckert, 1987; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989). This has

been a particular concern for the highest incidence group receiving special education services-- students with mild disabilities.

The vast majority of students with mild disabilities qualify for special education services due their relatively poor performance in reading (Leinhardt, Zigmond, & Cooley, 1981). However, examinations of how special education teachers enact literacy curriculum and instruction in special education classrooms suggests that students with mild disabilities are not receiving the kinds of strategic reading *or* writing instruction that advances their performance in these areas.

A study that seeks to better understand how an integrated curricular approach to literacy instruction might impact literacy learning in inclusion settings must first consider two central questions: (1) What are the reading and writing challenges for students with mild disabilities?, and (2) What literacy supports do students with mild disabilities need in order to benefit from placement in inclusion settings?

Literacy Challenges for Students with Mild Disabilities

A significant body of research has enriched our understanding of the problems that characterize the reading and writing performance of students with mild disabilities (Torgeson, 1982, Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony, Fear, & Gregg, 1988; Thomas, Englert, & Gregg, 1987; Englert & Raphael, 1988; and Oka & Paris, 1987). Studies examining how students with learning disabilities approach writing informational texts have identified several areas where students

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with learning disabilities have significant problems with proficiency in written language (Englert, Raphael, Andreson, Fear, & Gregg, 1987; Thomas et al., 1987; Englert and Raphael, 1988; and Graham, 1990).

There is general agreement that students with learning disabilities experience problems in activating strategies that support the writing process (i.e., idea generation and text organization), as well as the metacogitive knowledge to regulate and direct the process (Graham & Harris, 1991; Englert et al., 1988; Thomas et al., 1987; Englert, Raphael, Fear, & Anderson, 1988; and Wong, Wong, & Blenkisop, 1989). To compound the challenges associated with these higher level composition skills, students with learning disabilities also experience problems with writing fluency and text production fluency. Several studies have shown that poor handwriting and poor spelling are obstacles that generally inhibit students' production of text (Graham, 1990; Deno, Marston, & Mirkin, 1982; Graham, Boyer-Schick, & Tippets, 1989).

The strategic and metacognitive difficulties that characterize students' production of text similarly affect their ability to be self-regulating in reading (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Students with learning disabilities exhibit multiple difficulties when faced with reading tasks. Generally, they are weak in their independent and flexible use of strategic knowledge associated with effective comprehension monitoring (Paris & Oka, 1986; and Englert & Thomas, 1988). Specifically, students with learning disabilities typically do not engage in the kind of self-talk and questioning that guides their comprehension of text (i.e., "I think the main idea is...", "I predict that the next paragraph will be about..."). Further,

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students with learning disabilities have weak knowledge of the various text structures that authors of informational texts employ (expert, explanation, compare/contrast), thus preventing students from using text structure as a way to organize information systematically and generalize knowledge across various reading experiences (Englert, Tarrant, Mariage, & Oxer, 1994). Moreover, students with learning disabilities are typically well below grade level in basic reading skills (i.e., decoding, fluency), displaying fluency problems that interfere with reading comprehension, just as fluency problems in writing can interfere with the composition of meaningful text.

Reading and Writing in Special Education

Students with limited metacognitive knowledge often have little control over the complex processes of reading and writing. The body of literature examining students' reading and writing also underscores the importance of instruction that not only improves students' proficiency in the mechanical aspects of writing and basic reading skills acquisition, but also enhances students' knowledge of the processes of reading and writing, as well as promotes their strategic regulation and control of these processes (Raphael, Englert, & Kirschner, 1989).

Despite the importance placed on metacognitive and generalization training in the research literature (Wong, Wong, & Blenkisop, 1989; Ellis, Lenz, Sabornie, 1987a, 1987b), literacy instruction in special education classrooms does not particularly focus on compensatory comprehension nor problem-solving

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strategies (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Swanson, 1989). Several studies indicate that special education teachers tend to teach literacy as a series of isolated skills, rather than engage students in meaningful reading and writing experiences that promote students' strategic knowledge and higher-order conceptual understanding of literacy (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991; Ysseldyke, O'Sullivan, Thurlow, & Christenson, 1989; and Allington & Johnston, 1989). Isaacson (1989) reports that daily and sustained writing opportunities for students in special education classrooms are minimal. When such opportunities do occur, a significant emphasis is placed on writing mechanics to the exclusion of writing knowledge, content, and strategies. Similarly, reading instruction for students with learning disabilities has focused primarily on teaching students a hierarchy of decontextualized subskills, rather than engaging students in higher order activity involving cognitive explanations, demonstrations, and feedback (Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989).

While it is expected that special education classes will provide students with the kinds of instructional support to compensate for their specific reading and writing challenges, the prevailing and often exclusive emphasis on basic skills acquisition denies students access to the more strategic thought processes and metacognitive knowledge employed by proficient readers and writers. Instructional arrangements in special education that rely heavily on independent seatwork activity deny students access to the more meaningful conversations about literacy that promote deeper understanding and greater proficiency in reading and writing. Moreover, special education literacy practices that focus

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exclusively on basic skills acquisition fail to prepare students for successful

transition to the larger literacy community of general education (Tharp &

Gallimore, 1988).

Alternatives to Special Placements for Students with Mild Disabilities

In response to several criticisms of special education practices and

segregated programs for students with disabilities, schools across the nation are

presently addressing these concerns by implementing more inclusive

arrangements for educating students with identified special needs. For students

with mild disabilities, many educators have recommended full-time placement in

the general education classroom.

In the last several years various terms have emerged that label these

reform efforts and restructuring attempts to integrate special and general

education. In a 1993 position paper, the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA)

stated that "*Full inclusion, full integration, unified system, inclusive education*

[italics added] are terms used to describe a popular policy/practice in which all

students with disabilities, regardless of the nature or the severity of the disability

and the need for related services, receive their total education within the regular

education classroom at their home school." (1993, p. 3). The LDA however,

takes opposition to the wide-spread adoption of full inclusion for students with

learning disabilities suggesting that "... the regular education classroom is not the

appropriate placement for a number of students with learning disabilities who

may need alternative instructional environments, teaching strategies, and/or

materials that cannot or will not be provided within the context of a regular classroom placement" (1993, p. 3). Several others agree, suggesting that the organization of the general education curriculum must undergo bold transformations if we hope to accomplish our goals for inclusion (Gerber, 1988; Pugach, 1995; Pugach & Warger, 1997; Cook & Friend, 1995; Gersten & Woodward, 1990). Relatedly, sceptics of full inclusion argue that widespread adoption of inclusion programs must be preceded by more rigorous attempts to study the academic outcomes of such programs as they relate to students with mild disabilities (Kaufman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Murphy, 1995).

Educators, researchers, adminstrators, parents, advocacy groups, and various professional organizations continue to grapple with both sides of the inclusion debate. As the debate continues, school districts across the nation are developing their own versions of inclusive education, and more and more students with mild disabilities are being returned full-time to general education classrooms. In response to this movement, studies over the last several years have sought to determine whether or not inclusion works. The next sections provide a review of several studies that examine general education programming for students with mild disabilities. These sections highlight various aspects of the inclusion literature that include (a) the impact of inclusion on student achievement, (b) instructional accommodations for students in inclusion settings, and (c) general education instructional planning models and practices to support students in general education settings.

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The Impact of Inclusion on Students' Literacy Achievement

As previously mentioned, a critical issue that has emerged from discussions surrounding inclusion involves the wide spread adoption of inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities. Skeptics of full inclusion argue that the general education classroom may not be the most appropriate program for every student with mild disabilities, and that wide spread adoption of such programs must be preceded by intense efforts to measure the effects of general education placement on student achievement.

In a study that measured the effects of an Inclusive Schools Program (ISP) on the achievement of students with learning disabilities, Waldron & McLeskey (1998) found that students with mild learning disabilities who were placed full-time in general education settings made significantly more progress on a curriculum-based measure of reading than did students who received instruction in special education pull-out programs. Further, 67% of students with mild learning disabilities who participated in the Inclusive Schools Program made gains in reading that were comparable to their normally-achieving peers. However, this was not the case for students with severe learning disabilities (i.e., students who scored a standard score of 82 or lower in reading on the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement administered in the fall). Although students with severe learning disabilities demonstrated greater progress in the inclusion class compared to those students with severe learning disabilities who received instruction in the pull-out programs, their achievement gains did not compare to those made by their normally-achieving peers in the general classroom`` setting.

While this study found that students with learning disabilities who received instruction in inclusive programs made significantly greater achievement gains in reading than those students served in special education pull-out programs, the researchers provided a word of caution regarding inclusion placement for *all* students with learning disabilities. Although many special education pull-out programs may not be providing services that advance students' performance in literacy, general education programs, as well, may not be equipped with the necessary resources and strategies to support students with more severe learning disabilities. In Waldron & McLeskey's (1998) words, "placement in an inclusive classroom does not provide a panacea for students with learning disabilities..." (p. 403). The authors proceeded to suggest that "the necessity remains to develop and implement effective instructional methods to increase the opportunities that these students have for learning academic material, as well as for increasing the rate at which these skills are developed" (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998, p. 403).

The Adaptive Learning Environments Model

The Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM) (Wang & Walberg, 1983) was an educational program that entailed an integrated and comprehensive instructional model to improve the performance of low achieving students and students with mild disabilities in general education settings. According to Wang & Zollers (1990), the ALEM is a conceptual framework that

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incorporates the following features to facilitate the adaptation of instruction to differences in student learning styles:

> (a) individualized progress plans that consist of a highly structured prescriptive component for social and personal development and basic skills mastery and an exploratopry component for social and personal development and basic skills enrichment; (b) a diagnostic-prescriptive monitoring system that incorporates curriculum-based, criterion-referenced assessments; and (c) a classroom instruction-learning management system (p. 14).

The researchers reported on an evaluation study that showed that the literacy achievement results of mainstreamed special education students were enhanced by their participation in ALEM programs (i.e., full-time placement in general education classrooms). For example, when ALEM was implemented in several schools in Brooklyn, students with mild disabilities made an average yearly achievement gain of 1.04 in reading as reported in the standardized achievement tests administered by the school district. Further, 30% of special education students mainstreamed into ALEM classrooms in the Brooklyn study were recommended by their teachers as candidates for decertification (i.e., removal of the special education classification). The researchers suggested that this is an impressive statistic, given that the average decertification rate for students served in self-contained special education programs is less than 3% (Wang & Zollers, 1990).

Although the implementation of the ALEM has shown promising results for educating students with mild disabilities within the context of general education, the researchers advise that in order to maintain positive effects, a

comprehensive restructuring model such as ALEM requires "a systematic mechanism for providing staff development and implementation support" (Wang & Zollers, 1990, p. 18). Without such support, many restructuring efforts to improve services for students with learning challenges will be short-lived.

While these studies indicate that general education placement for students with mild disabilities can result in improved performance over more segregated pull-out programs, other studies have shown results that are less promising.

Implementing 'Best Practices' to Promote Student Learning

Jenkins and his colleagues (1991) conducted a four-year project to design and implement a school building model for accommodating low-achieving elementary students in full-time general education classrooms. The model examined the effects of three treatment interventions: (1) cooperative learning, (2) cross-age tutoring, and (3) in-class, rather than pull-out services for students with disabilities and remedial students. Two schools participated in the study: School 1 implemented the three interventions, and School 2 served as a comparison school, continuing to serve special education and remedial students in its traditional pull-out programs. In School 1, 95% of the special education and remedial students in the study received special services for reading and langauge arts. In School 2, 92% of the special education and remedial students received pull-out services for reading and langauge arts. The Basic Academic

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Skills Samples (BASS) (Espin, Deno, Maruyama, & Cohen, 1989) test was used

to measure achievement gains in math, written expression, spelling, and reading.

The results of this study did not favor the inclusion program. Compared to

School 2, no significant gains in reading, written expression, or spelling were

observed for students who participated in either the cooperative learning

treatment, the cross-age tutoring treatment, or the treatment that involved in-

class services provided by specialists in the general education setting. The

researchers concluded that the mere application of 'best practices' (i.e.,

cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring) to general education settings does

not "automatically result in improved achievement" (Jenkins, Jewell, Leicester'

Jenkins, & Troutner, 1991, p. 319). Moreover, data collected on the attitudes

and perceptions of teachers revealed that teachers found the in-class services to

be awkward. For example, many general education teachers felt that the in-

class specialists had little knowledge of the general education reading program,

and thus had difficulty incorporating instructional strategies into the ongoing

reading curriculum. Relatedly, the researchers reported that many in-class

specialists had difficulty negotiating the division of labor between themselves and

the general education teachers. In-class specialists for instance, perceived

themselves to be relegated to the role of a teaching assistant, having few

opportunities to meaningfully integrate their expertise into the existing curriculum

of the general classroom.

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Project MELD

The research of Baker & Zigmond (1990) also suggests that the general education classroom may not be the most appropriate place for teaching students with mild disabilities. Project MELD (Mainstream Experiences for Learning Disabled Students) was developed to accommodate students with learning disabilities in general education settings (Baker & Zigmond, 1990a). Project MELD incorporated a collaborative framework where school adminstrators and general and special education faculty worked together to fully integrate students with learning disabilities into the ongoing develomental instructional program of the general education classroom. Supplemental support and assistance was provided to students with learning disabilities and their classmates within the context of the general classroom. The MELD model required classroom teachers to work with special education teachers to develop more effective approaches to teach literacy. The model also required teachers to monitor student reading achievement through the systematic administration of curriculum-based measures.

To test the effectiveness of the MELD model, baseline data were first collected on thirteen elementary students with learning disabilities who received their instruction in special education pull-out programs. The year following the baseline year (i.e., MELD implementation), the 13 students were integrated full-time into general education classrooms. The observational data suggested that students with learning disabilities who received their instruction in the special education pull-out programs (base-line year) (a) had limited direct instruction in

reading and mathematics, (b) engaged in more workbook activity, (c) spent less than half their academic instructional time monitored by an adult, and (d) spent a substantial portion of their time playing games, working on reinforecement activities, and watching instructional TV. During the MELD implementation year however, students with learning disabilities who were fully integrated into general education classes (a) were assigned more opportunities to engage with connected text materials rather than workbooks, (b) spent more of their reading time in teacher-directed reading lessons, and (c) demonstrated more on-task behavior during reading and mathematics time than they had in the special education pull-out classes.

Although the observational data reported in the Baker & Zigmond (1990) study suggested that students with learning disabilities generally received more instructional opportunities in the integrated settings, the achievement data reported in this study suggested that students with learning disabilities did not benefit significantly from general education placement. In this study, students with learning disabilities who were integrated full-time into the general education classrooms did not make significant achievement gains in reading. Achievement data reported on both a standardized test as well as a curriculum-based measure for both the baseline year and the MELD implementation year show that students with learning disabilities made minimal progress in both settings. In both settings, students with learning disabilities improved less than one word per week in the number of words read correctly per minute from graded texts. Furthermore, when grades assigned to students with learning disabilities in the

integrated settings were examined, there was a significant downward shift as compared to grades earned by these same students in the previous year. Of the 76 grades assigned to students with learning disabilities, 34.2% were D's and 32.9% were E's. The highest failure rates were in language arts, reading, and spelling.

Baker & Zigmond contend that although "the special education environments from which the students were taken were not educationally challenging" (p. 184), the general education settings in which students with learning disabilities were placed still failed to meet the students' instructional needs. Baker & Zigmond extended a word of caution regarding the wide-spread adoption of inclusion for students with learning disabilities, suggesting that it takes time (i.e., more than one year) to change the mainstream environment in ways that make it an effective placement for all students.

Instructional Supports for Students with Mild Disabilities

The more recent research of Zigmond & Baker (1995) was designed to look for evidence that accommodations were being made for students with learning disabilities who were mainstreamed full-time into general education settings. After conducting several case studies (in sample schools across 5 states) in which they systematically observed and described the classroom experiences of students with learning disabilities in the context of the general education classrooms, Zigmond and Baker (1995) again raised several concerns about full inclusion for students with learning disabilities.

In the Zigmond and Baker studies, students with learning disabilities were integrated full-time into general education classes where they were provided full access to the general education curriculum together with their normally-achieving peers. A collaborative model for service delivery was implemented by general and special education teachers in each of the 5 schools that were studied, although there was some variance across sites in terms of the special educator's role. For example, some special education teachers assumed the role of support teacher, pulling small groups of students aside for more remedial instruction, while other special education teachers assumed more of a co-teaching role in the classroom. Classroom observation and interview data collected on the participating teachers and adminstrators at each of the sites yielded some common patterns across the five schools. Although each school was reported by the researchers as having a genuine interest in improving its services to students with learning disabilities, the results across all 5 sites suggested that students with learning disabilities were not receiving the kinds of instruction that accommodated their individual needs. The following sections describe what the researchers observed in the general education classrooms.

Classroom Accommodations and Instructional Grouping. Although the researchers in this study hoped to see accommodations that were more directed toward individual students with special needs, this was not the case. Instructional grouping arrangements in all five sites consisted primarily of whole-group instruction, where accommodations may have been prompted by an

attempt to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, although accommodations were viewed as changing the instructional approach for the entire class. The researchers rarely observed instruction that was specifically designed to address the needs of a single student.

In all the classrooms that Zigmond and Baker studied, modifications to curriculum materials, assignments, and assessment tasks were being implemented by the teachers. For example, assignments were often cut in half, students could choose a portion of the spelling words on which to be tested, or students were given opportunities to preview or rehearse the following week's reading selection, including chapters to be read in content areas. The researchers reported that these types of accommodations were made for the entire class, not just for those students with learning disabilities. For students with learning disabilities who required assistance that went beyond the scope of these more general types of accommodations, assistance was provided by peers (e.g., study buddies) or paraprofessionals (i.e., instructional assistants). For students with learning disabilities who required even more intense support, "pull-out services were re-invented" (Zigmond & Baker, 1995, p 175). In these circumstances, special education teachers would often work with a student with learning disabilities outside of the classroom on a one-on-one basis.

Remediation. The researchers reported that across all five school sites, administrators, teachers, and parents recognized that many students with learning disabilities needed support that could not always be provided within the

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context of the general education classroom. Further, general education teachers reported that there was not enough time in the school day to connect with those students who required greater assistance. What the researchers observed was a peer system of support whereby students with learning disabilities received attention, coaching, and corrective feedback from their non-disabled peers. For example, in one school site, a cross-age tutoring program was implemented outside of the general classroom. In this case, intermediate-grade students were paired with primary-grade students to work on reading fluency and comprehension. In three other school sites, teachers implemented cooperative learning groups for grade-level instructional activities in reading. In other sites, paraprofessionals assumed direct service roles where they taught small-group lessons to students who needed special attention.

Instructional Planning. Although planning time was built into the models implemented in three of the school sites, the other two sites did not engage in systematic instructional planning. If planning conversations were observed, it was often, in the researchers' words, "on-the-fly" (p. 172). Although three of the schools had designated between 30-60 minutes of planning time per week for meetings between special and general education teachers, instructional planning occurred at the "activity" level. For example, instead of designing unique instructional assignments around the academic needs of an individual student, teachers would get together to discuss what reading assignment or worksheet would be given to the group. Further, when special education teachers made

suggestions about activities for students with learning disabilities, the suggested

activities usually reflected sterotypical views of what *all* students with learning

disabilities need in order to be successful (e.g., graphic organizers), versus

suggestions based upon the teachers' knowledge and assessment of an

individual student's needs. Relatedly, the researchers observed that

instructional planning decisions were not based on student data. That is,

teachers rarely drew on their assessments of student progress to make informed

decisions about what to teach next or how to teach it – whether for the group as

a whole, or for individual students who may have been struggling with a concept.

Summary

Much of the research that has examined the impact of inclusion on

student achievement has led to mixed, and often ambiguous findings. What this

may suggest is that future research needs to move beyond the mere comparison

of student outcomes to focus more specifically on (a) providing rich descriptions

of instructional practices and curriculum that support students with mild

disabilities in general education settings, (b) examining how general and special

educators can maximize their collective expertise within the context of

collaborative teaching models, and (c) creating effective inclusive programming

through on-going, comprehensive and systematic staff development.

While it is important to consider the potential benefits of innovative

instructional formats for teaching diverse groups of students, the research

reported by Jenkins and his colleagues (1991) suggests that cooperative

learning and peer-tutoring alone do not provide students with mild disabilities

with the strategic tools to advance their performance in literacy. Similarly,

transporting specialists to the general education classroom, without providing

mechanisms that enable special and general educators to engage in meaningful

problem-solving around issues related to planning, instruction, and assessment,

does not guarantee that students with disabilities will benefit from general

education placement. We are reminded by the less than desirable results

reported in the Jenkins et al. (1991) and the Zigmond & Baker (1990; 1995)

studies, of what Fullan (1992) refers to as the "superficial trappings of change"

(p. 78). According to Fullan (1992) educational reform requires more than a

cosmetic change in the teaching *materials* educators use (e.g., modified tests) or

the teaching *methods* they employ (e.g., peer-tutoring). To ensure that

educational success will be attained and maintained over time, changes in

teachers' *beliefs* are also required. To avoid falling victim to the "superficial"

features of reform, restructuring efforts (such as inclusion) must address

changes in teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices as they relate to student

outcomes (Fullan, 1992). Further, as observed in the Zigmond & Baker (1990)

study, significant change does not occur in a single year. In order for deep

changes to occur, teachers must be given time to integrate new ways of thinking

about literacy into their existing instructional framework. For most teachers,

these changes may start with one activity at a time until they are ready to expand

their knowledge and incorporate new activities. (Englert & Tarrant, & Rozendal,

1995; Gersten & Woodward, 1995). This is why teacher change is a long-term process, often involving two years or more (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

Research that seeks to better understand how inclusion can benefit students with mild disabilities must pay close attention to what teachers do to accommodate students in the general education classroom, but more importantly, to examine what teachers do to propel students' performance (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Directing our attention to how teachers engage students in meaningful literacy activity in the classroom is particularly important, given that the vast majority of students with learning disabilities, as well as many low-achieving students, demonstrate the need for more direct and strategic instruction in reading and writing. To date, most of the reported research on inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities does not describe or document how teachers change their instructional practices in order to address the needs of a growing number of students who demonstrate strategic and metacognitive difficulties in learning to read and write. Moreover, in order to increase the liklihood that the collaborative efforts of general and special educators will result in more effective teaching for all students, restructuring efforts must consider ways to help general and special educators cross the instructional boundaries that have for so long separated them. In order to provide a comprehensive system of service for all students, general and special educators must have opportunities to share in instructional decision-making in ways that capitalize on their unique areas of expertise.

Working Toward Inclusive Practices for Students with Mild Disabilities

Much of the reported research on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion suggest that general education teachers are willing to make instructional accommodations for students with mild disabilities (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Zigmond & Baker, 1995). However, in light of the day-to-day realities of classroom teaching and the growing demands placed on general educators, many students with mild disabilities are still not receiving appropriate instructional support in the mainstream. Several studies indicate that while teachers report themselves as making accommodations for their low-achieving students, the supports and accommodations that have been observed generally do not reflect the intense instructional support required to support students' learning (Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Zigmond & Baker, 1990; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Several researchers propose that the failure of general educators to implement instructional practices that address diverse groups of learners is often the result of insufficient knowledge about how to instructionally plan for students with disabilities, as well as insufficient knowledge about effective teaching and learning strategies (Lenz, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Gersten & Woodward, 1990). The next sections describe several instructional planning models and strategies designed to support general educators in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. These models, designed to help general educators alter their instructional practices, differ from the inclusion models discussed in the previous sections because they are designed to engage teachers in staff development processes

that involve more comprehensive planning and problem-solving that centers around the instructional needs of diverse student populations.

Instructional Planning and Practices for Students with Disabilities

The Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities conducted four years of research across four separate projects that examined various planning interventions and prescribed practices designed to help general education teachers implement systematic instructional planning for students with disabilities. The primary goal of the projects was to provide various structures that enabled general education teachers to (a) redirect their instructional planning in ways that would lead to substantial changes in their teaching practices, and (2) engage in new classroom practices that would result in new ways of thinking about planning for diverse populations. The research was based on the belief that the likelihood for success of any inclusion program is determined in large part on the <u>level of support that general education teachers are afforded</u>. The researchers referred to this as "supported inclusion", and outlined a set of instructional conditions that increase the likelihood that inclusion programs will result in success for teachers as well as students. The researchers suggested that supported inclusion means that classroom teachers:

> "Are philosophically committed to meeting the needs of all students in the general education classroom, including those with mild disabilities; have sufficient time to think about and plan for the diverse needs of students in their class(es); incorporate teaching practices that enable them to better meet the needs of all students in their class(es); collaboratively work with special education teachers to assess, teach, and monitor student progress; have the option for their students to

receive *short-term*, intensive instructional support from a special education teacher; and have the option for their students to receive sustained instruction in basic skills or learning strategies that cannot be provided in the general education classroom" (The Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities, 1995, pp. 5-6).

Guided by this set of intructional conditions, a number of planning interventions and prescribed practices were introduced to general education teachers in schools across four separate project sites. These interventions were designed to support general education teachers in their instructional planning for students with disabilities. The next section describes several of the interventions that were introduced to teachers in a series of evaluation studies carried out by researchers on the Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities.

Instructional Planning to Re-direct Teaching Practices

Planning Pyramids. Researchers at the University of Miami (see Schumm et al., 1994) developed planning interventions that used a pyramid framework to help teachers develop effective unit and lesson plans that spanned the range of student capability. Both the unit and lesson planning pyramids were designed to engage teachers in a planning *process* in content area teaching. The process involved a mental template called the Planning Pyramid and it helped teachers to engage in self-questioning techniques to enhance their instructional planning for diverse groups of students. Teachers were provided a series of self-questions to direct their thinking during instructional planning. The self-questioning process helped teachers to focus their attention on (a) what

content will be learned (determined by a student's needs), and (b) how learning will be directed. The planning pyramid was divided into three sections that were labeled (1) *what all students should learn*, (2) *what most students will learn,* and (3) *what some students will learn*. An accompanying form that the teachers completed was similarly labeled, and teachers used this form to dileneate teaching materials and resources, instructional strategies and adaptations, and evaluation procedures and end products for each of the three groups of students identified. According to the researchers, the pyramid process "enables teachers to become more explicit about what they want students to learn and more proficient in planning units to promote learning for *all* students" (Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities, p. 10).

The Planning Pyramid was field tested with general education teachers at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Although the researchers reported that the Planning Pyramid framework is still "under construction", they suggested that the preliminary findings are encouraging. According to the researchers, teachers who implemented the framework as part of a staff development model to improve instructional planning for students with special needs reported that (a) the framework's simplicity is one of its greatest strengths, (b) the framework's graphic organizer "becomes a third eye" for teachers as they begin the planning process, and (c) the framework has enabled teachers to plan for students with learning disabilities without sacrificing the progress of other students (Schumm, Vaughn, & Leavell, 1994, p. 614).

Planning Routines. Another planning intervention designed for content

area instruction was introduced by researchers at the University of Kansas (see

Lenz et al., 1994). The Course Planning Routine involved six stages. The first

stage involved (1) planning the course of study, (2) selecting content outcomes,

(3) mapping critical content to form a visual organizer for students, and (4)

analyzing the level of difficulty of the course content. In the first stage, teachers

developed a series of ten questions that they wanted students to be able to

answer at the end of the course of study. The second stage of the Course

Planning Routine involved teachers in a series of self-questions designed to

ensure that all students involved in the course (i.e., unit of study) felt as though

they were part of a community of learners. In the third stage of the Course

Planning Routine teachers identified target students who represented high,

average, and low achieving students, and students with disabilities. This was

designed to help teachers keep track of particular students in terms of planning

and teaching across the duration of the unit. Stage four required teachers to

translate their decisions into an actual plan for teaching the content of the

course. In stage five, teachers revisited the course map (i.e. critical content) that

was developed in stage one; this helped teachers to stay focused on the

decisions, themes, concepts, and questions guiding the course. In the last stage

(the course evaluation stage), teachers used students' answers to the ten

questions developed in stage one to determine instructional success. This last

stage also involved a discussion with students regarding the quality of the

learning community.

Planning Frameworks. Researchers from the Education Development Center in Massachusetts (see Morocco et al., 1994) developed an integrated planning framework based on social constructivist principles. The planning framework encompassed four components designed to help teachers incorporate principles of active learning into their instructional planning for students with disabilities.

The first component, *Teacher as Composer,* was based on a holistic or constructivist approach to developing children's abilities in reading and writing. An underlying premise of this component is that children are active meaning-makers, and that children with learning disabilities need to be provided with a meaningful context for learning higher-level literacy skills. This component of the planning process involved a series of three-to-four month cycles where program facilitators led teachers in (a) workshops that engaged teachers themselves in literacy activity and reflection on the challenges associated with literacy processes, particularly as they relate to higher-order literacy processes and learners with disabilities, (b) workshops that engaged teachers in the collaborative development of classroom literacy assignments, assessment procedures, and guidelines for analyzing students' writing, (c) classroom activity where teachers taught a new lesson(s) and were observed and supported by a peer or program facilitator, (d) classroom activity where teachers gathered samples of students' work (students with and without disabilities) and used this work as a basis for talking with students about their challenges, planning additional classroom support for the students, and for critically examining their

own teaching approaches to facilitate students' performance in literacy, and (e) workshops that engaged the teachers in sharing, reflection, and analysis as it related to their literacy instruction and the products produced by their students.

The second component of the planning process involved <u>thematic units and thinking frames</u>. This component involved the teachers in the development of thematic units to engage students in higher-order literacy and problem solving. The thematic units and thinking frames provided teachers with a framework for planning, instructing, and assessing students within the context of thematic teaching.

To implement the instructional features of thematic teaching, the teachers first selected a theme that was relevant and motivationally challenging to students. The goal was to select a theme that promoted complex thinking and that engaged students in linking what they already knew to new information. A second feature of the thematic teaching required the teachers to select high quality literature that offered a detailed context for exploring the theme.

The third component of the planning process involved the construction of a 'thinking frame', where teachers engaged in a process that required them to "disentangle" the major thinking processes in which their students would engage (e.g., perspective taking, comparing, reflecting) within the context of the thematic unit. The construction of a thinking frame also required the teachers to determine the characteristics of the writing genre that they hoped their students would produce. This involved teachers' consideration of students with special learning needs, taking into account individual students' thinking challenges,

background knowledge, writing skills, and learning strengths. Teachers were encouraged to consider the ways in which they would stimulate student thinking, engage students in writing by asking stimulating questions during read-aloud and composing sessions, and to make decisions about how to assess reading and writing. This also involved the teachers' on-going assessment of their students' writing in order to assess students' thinking and problem-solving.

The fourth component of the planning process involved teachers' <u>planning around focal students.</u> This component was designed to help teachers tailor thematic instruction in ways that addressed the diverse instructional needs of students in the class. This component of the planning process engaged teachers in the following steps: (1) selecting one low-achieving student (in reading and writing), and one high-achieving student (in reading and writing), (2) identifying a theme for a literacy unit that appealed to the class, as well as the selected focal students, (3) selecting literature, and developing assignments and writing activities based on the needs and abilities of the selected focal students, (4) making conjectures about what it might be that each of the focal students needed in order to engage fully in the literacy processes and to participate in meaningful class discussion, (5) testing and revising conjectures through an on-going assessment of students' written products and observations of students' performance in classroom activity, and (6) assessing whether or not the support provided to the focal students was beneficial to other students in the class.

Teaching Practices to Re-direct Instructional Planning

In addition to developing planning processes and procedures that helped teachers re-direct their teaching practices, researchers from George Peabody College of Vanderbuilt University, as well as those from the University of Kansas developed instructional interventions deigned to help teachers re-direct the ways in which they planned for students who represented a range of social and academic needs. The following sections describe two of these interventions that were introduced to teachers.

Curriculum-Based Measurement and Class-wide Peer-Mediated

Instruction. The Fuchs and their colleagues (1994) developed an instructional intervention that enabled classroom teachers to support low-achieving and academically-challenged students in reading within the context of general education. The intervention combined a curriculum-based measurement procedure with Class-wide Peer-Mediated Instruction for reading. To implement the process, classroom teachers (a) engaged in weekly, computer-managed assessment of students' integrated reading performance that was based on grade-level material, (b) provided weekly feedback to students on their progress in reading, and helped students set personal reading goals for the next week, (c) used assessment results to determine the content, and paired partners for class-wide peer-tutoring sessions, (d) conducted Class-wide Peer-Mediated Instruction three times per week that included partner reading, paragraph shrinking, and prediction relay activities, and (e) incorporated instructional adaptations into the

peer-mediated instruction using information obtained from weekly student assessments.

Learning Strategy Instruction. Researchers from the University of Kansas (see Deshler & Schumaker, 1993) discussed the importance of planning for and teaching learning strategies in conjunction with subject matter, stating that this combination helps teachers to develop greater sensitivity towards the diverse learning needs of students. The researchers proposed a simple procedure that helped teachers integrate learning strategy instruction into their subject-matter instruction.

The learning strategy instruction required teachers to (1) select a strategy that matched the goals associated with the nature of the subject matter they were teaching (e.g., a parapharasing strategy if the class engaged in frequent discussion), (2) describe and model the strategy for students, discussing how the strategy will help them learn, and how the strategy is to be used, (3) provide multiple opportunites for students to apply the strategy within the context of meaningful class activity, (4) cue students to use the strategy, (5) dicuss how the strategy is related to outcomes, (6) provide students with feedback on strategy performance, and (7) provide students with multiple opportunites to generalize their use of the strategy to various problem-solving tasks.

Emerging Themes from the Work of the Joint Committe on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities

The researchers on the Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities found important themes that emerged from the evaluation studies they conducted to help teachers beging to develop meaningful planning processes and classroom practices to support students with disabilities in the general classroom. The planning procedures and practices described in the previous sections were introduced to teachers across four project sites as part of an on-going, comprehensive staff development process to improve services for students with disabilities. The initial themes that emerged from this early work have important implications for how we might direct our efforts in order to accomplish our goals for inclusive education.

The first theme that emerged reflected classroom teachers' sensitivity and concern for students at-risk. The teachers' overall sensitivity and concern however, did not compensate for the fact that they were "stymied" about what to do with students who could not keep up with the rest of the class. Similarly, in Zigmond and Baker's (1995) research, the researchers learned that general educators had a genuine interest in accommodating students with learning disabilities, however the results of classroom observations and interviews suggested that teachers often lacked the necessary knowledge, skills, and time to plan for and develop effective instructional accommodations for students with disabilities.

A second theme that emerged involved <u>the potential benefits of general</u> <u>education placement for students with disabilities when specific planning</u> <u>strategies and instructional approaches are implemented by the classroom</u> <u>teacher</u>. In field tests where several of the planning processes and instructional practices were implemented by general education teachers, the researchers across all four project sites found that these procedures and practices were workable and effective for most students in general education classrooms, including those students with mild disabilities. In fact, the researchers reported that "successful instruction can take place and that students with disabilities *can* successfully respond to the demands of the regular classroom while, at the same time, the performance of other students in the class improves commensurately" (p.4). Wang and Zollers (1990) reported equally-promising results, suggesting that a comprehensive model that incorporates a structured planning and monitoring system, curriculum-based assessment, and a classroom instructional management system can lead to significantly greater achievement for students with disabilities. Zigmond and Baker (1995) too, suggest that the general education classroom can be an appropriate placement for many students with learning disabilities if classroom teachers systematically engage in more effective instructional practices and resist the temptation to return to 'business as usual'.

A third theme discussed by the researchers on the Joint Committee on Teacher Planning involved <u>teachers's demonstrated desire to improve their</u> <u>teaching skills in order to work with academically diverse groups of students</u>.

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There were two contingencies embedded in this theme, however. First, the researchers observed that teachers were more willing to embrace new practices that readily fit with their existing instructional framework. Second, teachers were more willing to implement practices that were likely to benefit *all* students in the class, not just those students with special needs. While several of the accommodations observed in their case studies seemed to be prompted by the needs of an individual student, these accommodations were often provided for the class as a whole.

A final theme that emerged from the collective work of the Joint Committee on Teacher Planning involved the <u>students with mild disabilities for whom the instructional adjustments did not work</u>. Although the majority of students involved in the research benefited from the instructional methods, some students did not. Similarly, other researchers have observed that not all students with disabilities benefit from instruction in the mainstream (Jenkins et al., 1991). In the Waldron and McLeskey (1998) study for example, students with more severe learning disabilities did not make gains that were comparable to their general education peers. Zigmond and Baker (1992) also observed that students with learning disabilities who were fully integrated into general education classrooms where teachers worked to implement more effective literacy practices, did not improve their performance in reading.

In their observations of teachers attempting to implement new planning models and practices, the researchers on the Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities suggested that the failure of innovative

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methods to reach all students is perhaps due to the fact that classroom teachers found their work to be so overwhelming that they "overlooked the difficulties that the student(s) with disabilities was having and *assumed* that learning had occurred" (p. 5). The researchers concluded that, "In order for students with disabilities to be successfully included in the general education classroom, educators need to think in terms of *'supported inclusion'*, not simply *'inclusion"* (p. 5). In this case, 'supported inclusion' means that *teachers*, as well as students must be provided with a system of supports that enable them to negotiate the demands of the inclusion classroom and the instructional challenges that accompany it.

Literacy Practices that Show Promise for Supporting Students and Teachers in the Inclsuion Process

A responsible examination of the impact of inclusion on students with disabilities must not merely consider whether or not students make greater reading gains in inclusion classrooms as compared to segregated programs, it must also consider the extent to which students with mild disabilities are provided opportunities to meaningfully connect with the literacy curriculum, to demonstrate their capabilities as readers and writers, and to contribute their ideas as valued members of a literacy community in the general education classroom (Englert, Tarrant, & Mariage, 1992). Aspiring to these more meaningful goals for inclusive education requires researchers to design studies that span more than one year; and moreover, it requires more critical attention

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to the instructional processes that affect literacy learning. In our continuing search for instructional methods that support students with mild disabilities in general education settings, we must also be more rigorous in our efforts to identify literacy practices that have shown promise in terms of propelling the reading and writing performance of students with mild disabilities. To date, few studies of inclusion have provided evidence to suggest that instruction was actually changing in the general education classrooms under study. Further, few studies have systematically examined how inclusion teachers integrate the multiple facets of literacy instruction to help students with disabilities to uncover the relationship between reading and writing, and acquire the strategic knowledge associated with proficient readers and writers. Moreover, as we continue to explore staff development models designed to improve literacy instruction for students with mild disabilities, educational reformers must consider the inherent short-comings of transmissive models that position teachers as the mere recipients of knowledge (Fullan, 1991). Rather, educational reformers must involve teachers as "informed agents, problem-solvers, and collaborators in the educational change process" (Englert & Tarrant, 1995, p.325). As discussed previously, teachers, as well as students must be supported in the inclusion process as they take the necessary risks to change their existing practices to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. The following section describes a research project that shows promise in terms of helping general education teachers develop more inclusive literacy instruction for students with disabilities.

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The Early Literacy Project

The Early Literacy Project (ELP) (Englert. et al., 1995) was a multi-year collaborative study between university researchers and special education teachers, designed to improve the context for literacy learning in special education settings. The Early Literacy Curriculum encompassed several activities (e.g., Morning News, Sharing Chair, Journal Writing, Partner Reading, Thematic Units) that emphasized student collaboration, strategic instruction, and teacher mediation across all areas of the literacy curriculum. Several studies conducted as part of the Early Literacy Project revealed significant reading gains for students with mild disabilities who received the ELP curriculum. In one study that examined whether ELP students maintained their knowledge over periods of noninstruction (e.g., 3 months in the summer) and across two years of instruction in the ELP curriculum, the results indicated that 81% of the students who were tested using the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) upon returning to school in the fall increased in performance. Similarly, when tested using the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty, 57% of students improved over the summer, and 21% of students maintained their performance. When researchers examined the reading scores of the students to determine if they were making substantial improvements over time in the direction of catching up with their grade level peers, the results from the SORT and the Durrell indicated that 78% of the ELP students were able to read at their grade level placement with 90% accuracy within two years of starting instruction in the ELP curriculum.

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The Early Literacy Project, comprised of university researchers from

Michigan State University and three special education teachers from the local

public school district was a four-year collaborative effort that engaged the

researchers and teachers in a process of inquiry about literacy instruction that

would be meaningful and beneficial for students with mild disabilities in the

primary grades. While the ELP curriculum was originally designed to improve

literacy instruction in special education settings, the results of several

intervention studies suggest that the ELP curriculum has the potential to support

students with mild disabilities in general education classrooms. The ELP

curriculum is based on an integrated, curricular approach to teaching literacy that

emphasizes strategic instruction and collaboration between teachers and

students. Several features thought to be important in the instruction of emergent

readers and writers (Kameenui, 1993) were incorporated into the design of the

ELP curriculum. These features are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Instructional features incorporated into the design of the ELP curriculum.

The ELP curriculum development process was guided by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1980, 1991) that underscored the importance of "discourse and social interaction in learning and the necessity of involving children, regardless of their reading and writing ability, in the whole enterprise of literacy within a learning community" (Englert et al. 1995, p. 255). This perspective departs from the more traditional and reductionist perspectives in special education practices that have resulted in few opportunites for students with disabilities to engage with reading and writing in meaningful ways. The five social constructivist principles that guided the collaborative development of the ELP curricular approach are listed in Figure 2.

♦Literacy instruction should be embedded in meaningful, contextualized, and purposive activities.
♦Reading, writing, and speaking should be integrated across the curriculum.
♦Teachers need to responsively instruct students on a moment-to-moment basis, findings ways to meet students in their zones of proximal development, rather than to expect students to conform to curriculum goals.
♦Teachers need to promote self-regulated learning, finding opportunities to gradually cede control of the learning and problem-solving process to students.
♦Dialogic interactions need to be fostered, recognizing that knowledge is co-constructed in a learning community where all members contribute to a classroom discourse, and where knowledge is viewed as a social construction.
♦Literacy communities are an important basis for literacy learning. Teachers must establish routine opportunities for students to share oral and written texts; foster students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities as authors, readers, respondents. listeners, and informants in the community; and engender respect for students' ideas and risk-taking attempts.

Figure 2. Principles that guided the development of the ELP curricular approach.

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A unique feature of the design of the ELP involved the collaborative conversational engagement between university researchers and practicing teachers in the process of inquiry about literacy learning and instruction. Unlike many staff development models that tend to be insensitive to the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of teachers, and focus almost exclusively on the agenda of the innovator or researcher (McLaughlin, 1990), the conceptual framework of the ELP placed teachers at the center of instructional change. That is, the more meaningful context of the teachers' unique experiences, knowledge, and beliefs became the place where inquiry and problem-solving was situated. Rather than "handing over "a prescribed curriculum to the teachers as a quick-fix solution to their instructional dilemmas, the researchers and teachers worked collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of literacy principles and explored ways to enact those principles within the context of a student-centered, teacher-directed literacy curriculum.

The ELP teachers and researchers met on a weekly basis over the course of four years. During the early stages of this collaborative process, the researchers offered the aforementioned set of principles as a framework for helping teachers to examine their existing beliefs and literacy practices, and as a means for helping teachers rethink the teaching-learning process in reading and writing. Thus, teachers' early negotiations of the literacy principles became the basis for future decision making about how the principles might be put into practice in the classroom (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

Much of the initial collaborative activity of the ELP community focused on teachers' conversations about their individual teaching dilemmas related to reading and writing instruction and their questions about whether their special education students could perform in reading and writing activity that required higher order skills. Overtime however, the community functioned as a vehicle for supporting teachers as they re-examined their existing beliefs about literacy and the capabilities of their students. The ELP community of teachers and researchers eventually became a "think-tank", where teachers gradually seized the opportunity to take instructional risks with the support and feedback offered by other members of the community. Over time, as teachers implemented various literacy activities in the classroom with the support and coaching of one of the ELP researchers, their beliefs about how the curriculum might influence students' learning began to shift. As the teachers learned how to provide students with the strategic tools for literacy learning and to orchestrate particpation structures that afforded students multiple opportunities for success as readers and writers, teachers began to assume greater ownership of the literacy curiculum. Overtime, each teacher in the ELP community became an "expert" in a particular area of literacy instruction and provided leadership in helping other members develop their skills in those areas (see Englert & Tarrant, 1995; and Englert, Tarrant, and Rozendal, 1993). As such, the Early Literacy Curriculum (Englert et al., 1995) evolved from a process of collaborative inquiry and problem-solving that was situated in the more meaningful context of teachers' unique classroom experiences and their on-going negotiation of

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literacy principles. Figure 3 provides a detailed description of the activities that form the ELP curriculum.

Although certain pieces of the ELP curriculum began to take shape during the first year of the project (e.g., Morning News, Partner Reading), Englert and her colleagues suggest that the process of deep and sustained change cannot take place in a single year. The researchers report that it took ELP teachers two years to assume ownership of the curriculum and to recognize its significant impact on students' literacy performance (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

Conclusion

Many common themes emerging from much of the work related to the restructuring of special education have important implications for our continued efforts to develop more inclusive programs for students with disabilities. Two critical questions remain: "How can we support students in the inclusion classroom?", and "How can we support teachers to implement effective inclusive school programs?"

First, the literature suggests that most general educators have a deep concern for students with disabilities who fail to make progress in the mainstream. In our efforts to return students with disabilities to the general education classroom, we must trust in this concern, yet recognize that concern alone does not automatically translate into more effective teaching. Teachers must be provided the necessary supports to help them create more effective learning communities for diverse learners. To do this, we must recognize that

THEMATIC UNIT

Description ◆ Teacher and students brainstorm, organize, write drafts, read texts, or interview people to get additional information about a topic or theme from multiple sources ◆ Students use reading/writing strategies flexibly to develop and communicate their knowledge ◆ Theme is used as basis for selecting expository and narrative texts, and to organize and relate all activities ◆ Reading and Writing are continuously connected as students participate in discussions and read for information as a basis for writing, comprehending and responding to texts ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Model learning-to-learn strategies ◆ introduce language, genres, and strategies ◆ model reading/writing processes and connections ◆ provide interrelated and meaningful contexts for acquisition and application of literacy knowledge ◆ conventionalize and develop shared knowledge about the purpose, meaning, and self-regulation of literacy acts.

CHORAL READING

Description ◆ Teachers and students chorally read poems, predictable books, class stories, literature, student-authored texts ◆ Teachers model and teach a number of reading strategies, including predicting, organizing, summarizing, asking questions, rereading, locating information, and clarifying meaning ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Develop word recognition, phonics skills, context clues, and voice-print match ◆ provide experience reading whole texts and talking about literature ◆ develop literacy success immediately ◆ develop comprehension and personal response to text.

UNDISTURBED SILENT READING

Description ◆ Students engage in reading under several conditions: reading along, reading to an adult or peer, listening to new story at listening center ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Work on fluency for sharing chair ◆ provide experience with varied genres ◆ read texts related to thematic unit ◆ students ask and answer questions ◆ students prepare to make comments about or interpretations of the stories.

PARTNER READING/WRITING

Description ◆ Students read books or poems ◆ or write stories with partner or small group ◆ students listen to taped stories with partner ◆ students make personal responses to texts, complete story maps, or construct maps with partners that will be shared with whole class ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Work on fluency for sharing chair ◆ provide opportunities for students to fluently read and write connected texts ◆ provide opportunities for students to use literacy language and knowledge ◆ develop students' notions of 'community'.

SHARING CHAIR

Description ◆ Students share books, poems, or their own personal writing ◆ students control discourse and support each other ◆ students ask questions, answer questions and act as informants to peers and teacher ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Promote reading/writing connections ◆ empower students as members of the community ◆ allow students to make public their literacy knowledge and performance and develop shared knowledge ◆ develop students' notions of 'community'.

MORNING NEWS

Description ◆ Students dictate personal experience stories for newspaper publication ◆ teacher acts as scribe in recording ideas and as a coach in modeling, guiding, and promoting literacy strategies in text composition and comprehension ◆ students interact with authors to ask questions that elicit information from that author in order to shape and edit the language and content of the news story ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Model and conventionalize writing and self-monitoring strategies ◆ demonstrate writing conventions and skills ◆ provide additional reading and comprehension experiences ◆ make connections between oral and written texts ◆ promote sense of community ◆ empower students ◆ provide meaningful and purposeful contexts for literacy strategies.

STORY RESPONSE/DISCUSSION

Description ◆ Students read narrative stories and respond to those stories in various ways(e.g., sequence or illustrate story events or information, summarize story, make personal response, etc.) ◆ students work with partner or small groups to develop response ◆ **Purpose** ◆ Promote students' application of literacy strategies ◆ present varied genres to students ◆ promote students' enjoyment of texts ◆ make text structures visible to students.

Figure 3. Literacy activities that formed the ELP curriculum.

teachers first need <u>time</u> to assimilate new ways of thinking about learners; and second, teachers need more <u>authentic models</u> for developing new curricula and more effective teaching practices. Simple "recipe lists" for how to accommodate students with special instructional needs reflects a "one-size-fits-all" mentality that has not led to deep changes in teaching practices or to significantly greater learning outcomes for students. Instead, teachers need more authentic models to develop their knowledge and skills. Models that provide teachers opportunities to engage in a <u>process of apprenticeship</u> to inform and guide each other in more effective curricula and instructional practices are required.

Second, the data presented by Jenkins et al. (1991), suggests that special education teachers report feelings of awkwardness as they attempted to position themselves professionally in the context of general education, perhaps because of long-held separate roles in the school community. While special educators possess a unique and specialized knowledge about students with disabilities, this distinction has served to perpetuate the instructional barriers that exist between general and special education. The development of more integrated instructional programs that presumably draw on the expertise of both special and general educators requires a local mechanism whereby special and general education teachers can feel safe in taking the necessary risks to renegotiate their professional roles within the school community and classroom context. In very basic terms, this means that special and general educators must be provided <u>time to engage in meaningful dialogue and problem-solving</u> around the deeper issues of inclusive curriculum and pedagogy. Just as the mere

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placement of a special education student in an 'inclusion' classroom does not automatically translate into 'inclusive education', the mere presence of the special education teacher in the general classroom, does not guarantee that special and general educators (or students) will mutually benefit from their collective knowledge and skills.

Third, inclusion must be viewed as a process rather than a by-product of broad policy decisions that call for the consolidation of general and special education resources. As we have witnessed, sudden placement shifts from special education to general education often compromise the liklihood that students with disabilities will academically benefit from this change in placement. The research on inclusion reveals that not all students with disabilities profit from instruction in the mainstream. This is not surprising, particularly for students who have documented problems in reading and writing. Given the perceived failure of special education to provide students with the necessary problem solving skills and strategic knowledge to advance their performance in literacy, it is naive to expect that these same students, who already struggle with learning to read and write, will prosper in general education classrooms that either prescribe to similar instructional methods, or that have merely implemented the 'superficial' features of change (e.g., special grouping arrangements).

Fourth, inclusion is a complex process that requires comprehensive and systematic changes in the way we instructionally plan for students, monitor and assess their academic and social progress in targeted programs, and adjust curriculum and instruction accordingly. Vaughn and Schumm (1995) also

suggest that responsible inclusion requires an <u>on-going process of professional development</u> at the school level where teachers and other key personnel "discuss and develop their own philosophy on inclusion" (p. 268), recognizing that there is no "one 'right' inclusion model that is effective across [all] school sites" (p. 268).

Finally, as suggested by the researchers in the Early Literacy Project, <u>deep changes in teachers' practices are not liklely to happen within a single year</u>. As Fullan (1991) suggests, educational change is a long term process that requires teachers to not only change their instructional methods and materials, but also requires teachers to challenge and alter their existing beliefs about the teaching-learning process. According to Fullan (1991), it is teachers' beliefs that are most resistant to change. Thus, staff development models designed to support teachers as they attempt to build more inclusive communities for students with disabilities, must address the issue of teacher beliefs and their impact on teacher change.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach used to carry out the study and how the approach applies to research conducted in classroom settings. Also described in the chapter are characteristics of the study (setting, participants, design), data collection for the study (methods and materials, data sources, procedures), and data analysis procedures.

The Research Approach

The approach selected to explore the research questions described in Chapter One is a qualitative case study method. The selection of a qualitative case study method was initially determined on the basis of the following four considerations outlined by Merriam (1988): (1) the nature of the research questions, (2) the amount of researcher control, (3) the desired end product, and (4) the focus of investigation. The following sections describe how these four factors influenced the initial selection of a qualitative case study method.

The Nature of the Research Questions

Yin (1989) reminds us "that the form of the question provides an important clue regarding the appropriate research strategy to be used" (p.19). The nature of inquiry for this study involves a set of research questions that primarily ask "how". Specifically, this research seeks to explore a process, and therefore requires that the researcher engage in a method that is best suited to capture all

relevant pieces of the process as it unfolds. Research questions that ask "how" are best explored through qualitative case study method (Merriam, 1988). Relatedly, the set of research questions developed to explore the implementation of the ELP curriculum in a co-taught inclusion setting are not designed to test hypotheses; rather, the questions are designed in ways that will generate hypotheses as the process of co-teaching and curriculum implementation unfolds. Research that is designed to generate hypotheses has been widely used as a means of "building theory", especially when no theory exists for explaining a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1988). The phenomena in this study involves "how" the collaborative implementation of an integrated literacy curriculum unfolds within the context of a co-taught, full inclusion classroom.

The Amount of Researcher Control

A second factor that was considered in selecting a qualitative case study method involved the amount of control imposed on the research setting. Because this study is designed to examine a process and "take things as they are" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1984, p. 26), researcher control and manipulation of variables in the study is not appropriate. In fact, manipulation of treatment or subjects in this study would undermine the authenticity of the process under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1988) reminds us that in research studies where the goal is to describe, interpret, and understand processes as they unfold in the context of natural activity "it is impossible to identify all the important variables ahead of time" (p. 7).

The Desired End Product

A third factor that was considered in the selection of a qualitative case study method is also related to the nature of the research questions. The goal of this study is to capture and document the process of curriculum implementation as it naturally unfolds around the daily classroom experiences of two teachers and their students. The desired end product therefore, is a rich description and interpretation of the process.

The Focus of Investigation

A fourth deciding factor for selection of a qualitative case study method involved the identification of the *focus* of investigation. If a "bounded system" (Smith, 1978) is identified as the focus of investigation, then a case study method is the method of choice (Merriam, 1988). The research questions described in Chapter One were developed to explore a particular instance of collaborative teaching that is, in Merriam's (1988, p. 10) words, "intrinsically interesting." A qualitative case study method is the most appropriate choice for researching a particular instance of a process in order to "achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). The focus of investigation in this study is identified as a bounded system because the process under investigation has obvious boundaries (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1983). In this case the research is confined to a single classroom and the events that take place within.

Research Method as a Function of Research Paradigm

The four factors discussed in the previous sections were used as a framework to initially determine whether or not case study is the most appropriate method for exploring the research questions discussed in Chapter

One. The case method for this study is also influenced by a qualitative research approach, where the intent is not to measure, quantify, and present research findings using numerical data; the intent is to provide a *thick description and holistic account* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of how the ELP curriculum was implemented in the inclusion classroom, and to draw from the research data some initial interpretations about why things happened as they did (Merriam, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal then for this study, is to systematically document a process as it unfolds in order to contruct a framework or "theory" to guide and inform future practice.

A qualitative case study method, as it is described as the method of choice for this study, is rooted in the naturalistic research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry, or qualitative research is primarily differentiated from other types of research in terms of what the researcher hopes to accomplish with the data collected. In qualitative research the researcher is interested in "insight, discovery, and interpetation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). Case study in particular is described by Cronbach (cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 10) as "interpretation in context". Merriam (1988) adds, "By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity ("the case"), this approach aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study seeks holistic description and explanation"(p.10).

The naturalistic paradigm is also governed by a set of axioms that characterize the underlying assumptions guiding naturalistic inquiry. These axioms involve the following: (1) understanding of contextual features and anomolies versus prediction of outcomes and control of variables, (2) the relationship between the researcher and the "object" of research, (3) generating hypotheses versus testing hypotheses, (4) multiple and dynamic explanations versus static cause and effect relationships, and (5) value-bound versus value-

free inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the five axioms of a naturalistic research paradigm in the following way:

Axiom 1: There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied holisticially; inquiry into these realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding can be achieved.

Axiom 2: The inquirer and the "object" of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.

Axiom 3: The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual case.

Axiom 4: All entities are in a state of mutual simultaeous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

Axiom 5: Inquiry is value-bound in at least five ways, captured in the corollaries that follow:

> *Corollary 1:* Inquiries are influenced by inquirer values as expressed in the choice of the problem, evaluand, or policy option, and in the framing, bounding, and focusing of that problem, evaluand, or policy option.

> Corollary 2: Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the paradigm that guides the investigation into the problem.

> Corollary 3: Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the substantive theory utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and in the interpretation of findings.

> Corollary 4: Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the context.

Corollary 5: With respect to corollaries 1 through 4 above, inquiry

is either value-resonant (reinforcing or congruent) or value-

dissonant (conflicting). Problem, evaluand, or policy option,

paradigm, theory, and context must exhibit congruence (value

resonance) if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results (Lincoln

& Guba,1985, pp. 37-38).

Distinguishing Features of the Case Study Method

There are several features that can more clearly define the case study

method in qualitative research. First, "case sudies focus on a particular situation,

event, program, or phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p.11). In this way case

studies are said to be particularistic, making it a good choice of method for

bringing attention to the unique features of a process as it unfolds in the

everyday activities of a particular group of individuals. Second, case studies are

descriptive, lending themselves to a method of data collection that has the

potential to provide as the end product a rich, literal, and complete description of

the process under investigation. The descriptive feature of case studies means

that the researcher is not confined by a finite set of variables; rather, case

studies "include as many variables as possible and portray their interaction, often

over a period of time" (Merriam, 1988, p.13). A third feature of case studies

involves its holistic quality, where the interest lies in how all the parts work

together to form the whole. Case studies "illuminate the reader's understanding

of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1988, p.13). Stake (1981) suggests

that in case studies, "previously unknown relationships and variables can be

expected to emerge...leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied...

insights into how things get to be the way they are can be expected to result

from case studies" (cited in Merriam, 1988, p.13). Finally, a unique feature of

case study research is that for the most part, it relies on inductive reasoning. "Generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an examination of data—data grounded in the context itself" (Merriam, 1988, p.13).

Case Study Research Applied to Classroom Settings

Case study research in education has the potential to provide critical insights related to educational practice. Specifically, the qualitative case study method applied to classroom settings "seeks to understand specific issues and problems of practice" (Merriam, 1988, p. 23). With "understanding" as the goal, qualitative case study method is influenced by the disciplines of anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology. Qualitative case study research in classroom settings draws upon these disciplines in terms of their theoretical orientation, as well as techniques for data collection and analysis.

Case study methods applied to classroom settings have provided the impetus for much of our research in education and are uniquely defined by their evaluative and exploratory characteristics (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). A qualitative case study, like the one described in this chapter, that seeks to understand an educational process not only provides a rich description and holistic account of the process, it also "simplifies data to be considered by the reader, illuminates meanings, and can communicate tacit knowledge" (Guba & Lincoln, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 28). In this way, data is weighed and evaluated in order to produce an explanation of "the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey of experimental strategies" (Merriam, 1988, p. 29). The exploratory nature of a qualitative case study method is also critical to the understanding of educational practices. As Yin (1984) points out, "the case study strategy may be used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evauated has no clear, single set of

outcomes" (p. 25). The evaluative and exploratory nature of qualitative case study design is particularly important for classroom research where teachers are in the process of trying out new ideas and programs, and when the "objective of an evaluation is to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program" (Merriam, 1988, p. 30).

Summary

A qualitative case study method that is guided by the naturalistic paradigm is the most appropriate method for exploring the research questions described in Chapter One. The primary aim of qualitative research is to "understand the meaning of an experience" (Merriam, 1988, p.16), recognizing also that meaning is context-bound, and that all the particulars within a context need to be considered in order to explain how all the parts work together to form the whole (Patton, 1985). Lancy (1993) points out that a qualitative case study method is particularly useful when the researcher's aim is to learn more about innovative practices. This is especially significant for the study described in this chapter because there are several innovations taking place simultaneously (co-teaching, inclusion, curriculum implementation), and it is necessary to gather as much information as possible through multiple data sources in order to explore and evaluate the whole and draw meaningful interpretations that will inform future practice. In cases where schools are in the process of implementing new curricula and staffing arrangements, such as the case in the study described in this chapter, the qualitative case study method is the "method of choice for studying interventions and innovations" (Lancy, 1993, p. 140). Moreover, when the goal of the research is to explore innovative practices in order to inform policy, qualitative case study research has unique strengths. Collins & Noblit (1978) suggest that case study research (field research) "better captures

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situations and settings which are more amenable to policy and program intervention than are accumulated individual attributes... [case studies] reveal not static attributes, but understandings of humans as they engage in action and interaction within the contexts of situations and settings" (p. 26).

Study Characteristics

Setting

The study was conducted in a classroom at Avon Elementary School, located in a mid-sized urban school district in the mid-west United States. The classroom was selected as the research site based on three factors. First, the class was comprised of students with and without identified disabilities who received all of their instruction in the selected classroom. Second, the classroom was co-taught, on a full time basis by a special education teacher who was a member of the Early Literacy Project (ELP) community; and a general education second-grade teacher who had previously expressed an interest in co-teaching with the ELP teacher in an inclusion setting. Third, the ELP curricular approach discussed in Chapters One and Two was being implemeted in the classroom.

Characteristics of the school. Avon Elementary School is a two-story brick structure built in 1913, and is situated in an area of the city that is predominantly low in terms of socio-economic status. When this study was conducted, the school served 320 students in grades K-5. The student population was comprised of 44% European American, 30% African-American, 20% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 3% Indian. Of the 320 students, 91% participated in the free lunch program. Approximately 15% of the student population at Avon Elementary were identified special education students, with the majority of special education students classified as having learning disabilities. The school

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employed four special education teachers, three of whom worked in traditional resource room settings where the majority of their special education students received 50% or more of their instruction in the resource room.

A year prior to the beginning of the study, Avon Elementary School had been placed on probabtion by the State Department of Education due to the school's consistently low state-wide assessment scores. As a result, the principal of Avon, in his fifth year as adminstrator called upon teachers, parents, local university faculty and students, and the community to work together to develop innovative ideas to address the social and academic needs of Avon Elementary students. The principal encouraged teachers at Avon Elementary to become educational entrepreneurs, and supported their innovative efforts to improve teaching practices.

Classroom configuration. The classroom selected for the study was generally referred to by school personnel as the "inclusion" room. The inclusion room, located on the second floor of the school, was made up of two classrooms adjacent to one another. The door that separated the two rooms had been removed in order to join the classrooms in an effort to provide ample space for various seating and instructional arrangements, computer equipment, teaching stations, and materials. Although there were a few individual student desks placed in the classroom that had originally been the special education resource room, it is important to note that all students (special education and general education) had their "home" desks in one room. Figure 4 shows the lay-out of the inclusion classroom, indicating seating arrangements, work stations, and grouping arrangements for literacy activities.
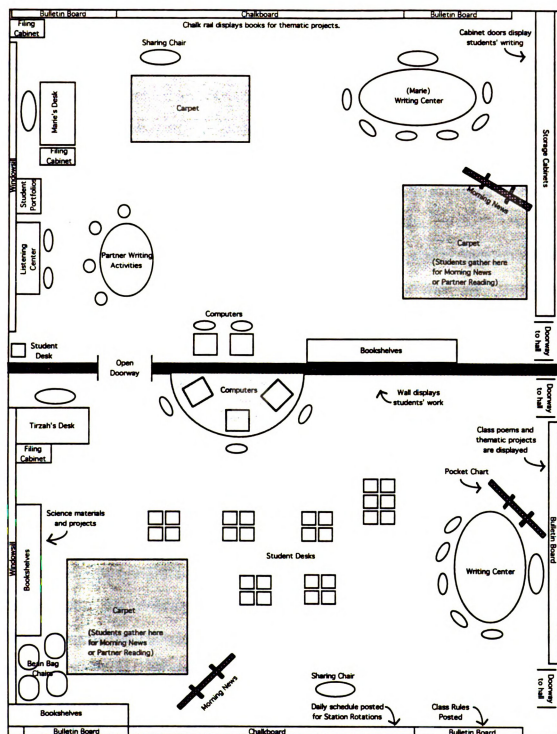
Figure 4. Physical arrangement of the inclusion classroom.

Teacher Participants

Special education teacher. Two teachers participated in the study. Marie, the special education teacher graduated from college with a degree in Early Childhood Education. Her early professional experience included two and a half years of teaching in a clinical setting where she worked with at-risk pre-school students, and three years teaching Kindergarten in public school. After completing her Masters degree in Special Education, Marie took a position at Avon Elementary where she worked as a special education resource room teacher for six years.

Marie was selected to participate in the study for several reasons. First, Marie had been one of the original members of the ELP community. Throughout her early involvement in ELP (1990-1993), Marie contributed significantly to the collaborative development of the ELP curriculum. Further, Marie recognized the impact that the ELP curriculum had on the reading and writing performance of students in her own resource room. After implementing the ELP curriculum for three consecutive years, many of Marie's students achieved grade level performance in reading after two years of instruction (Englert, Garmon, Mariage, Rozendal, Tarrant, & Urba, 1995).

Second, Marie frequently expressed an interest in sharing the ELP curriculum with general education teachers. Throughout her participation in ELP, Marie made various attempts to extend her knowledge and expertise in literacy learning and instruction to her general education colleagues by trying out some of the activities in their classrooms. While many of her attempts were short-lived due to scheduling conflicts, one of her efforts showed promise in terms of the potential impact that the ELP curriculum might have if implemented in an inclusion setting. Unfortunately, the general education teacher that Marie worked with in this effort took a family leave of absence at the end of the school

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year. However, Marie continued to express an interest in co-teaching where she would have an opportunity to implement the ELP curriculum in a general education setting that included her own special education students.

Another important reason that Marie was selected to participate in the study involved her deep knowledge of literacy. The collaborative development of the ELP curriculum was guided by literacy principles based on social constructivist theory. The principled knowledge about literacy learning and instruction that Marie brought to the co-teaching arrangement was unique, and is presumed to be unrepresentative of the more traditional reductionist perspectives that have characterized instructional practices in special education. Interview transcripts and documented field data that were collected as part of the Early Literacy Project (see Englert & Tarrant, 1995) highlight Marie's deep understanding of social constructivist principles that support students' literacy learning. Figure 3 describes the literacy principles that informed the collabortive development of the ELP curriculum.

Finally, Marie's membership in the ELP community provided her with an important framework for understanding meaningful collaborative processes, and for recognizing the benefits of "community" as a function of professional development. Therefore, the decision to select Marie to participate in the study was also based on her former experiences with professional collaboration.

General education teacher. Miriam, the general education teacher selected for the study had been teaching at Avon Elementary for three years. She joined the Avon staff directly after graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from a local university. Tirzah completed an undergraduate program entitled "Multiple Perspectives", where much of her elementary education course work was completed within a professional

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development school setting where she eventually did her student teaching. An underlying philosophy of the Multiple Perspectives program is that teachers are responisible for teaching "all" children. In light of this, it is interesting to note that Tirzah, in her three years of teaching at Avon Elementary had only referred one student for special education testing. In an early interview with Tirzah, she expressed her beliefs about pull-out programs for special education students. When asked about her experiences with special education students, Tirzah shared the following:

> I have always had special education students mainstreamed into my class, but I don't like it when the kids have to be pulled out of my class so they can go to the resource room. They miss too much when they're gone (Interview, 1993).

Clearly, accountability for "all" students was a responsibility that Tirzah accepted earnestly.

Tirzah began her professional career at Avon Elementary teaching Chapter One Math. During her second year at Avon she taught second grade; her third year she taught first grade. Tirzah was selected to participate in the study based on her expressed interest to take part in an inclusive teaching model with special education. During the summer before she was to begin her fourth year at Avon, Tirzah approached Marie and asked if she might be interested in co-teaching with her the following school year. At that time, Tirzah had decided to return to second grade teaching, and told Marie that she, and her second grade students could benefit from the kind of instruction that she had observed in Marie's special education resource room. In a formal interview, Tirzah discussed her former attempts to teach reading and writing, and reported that her efforts resulted in few gains for her students. She also admitted to her lack of enthusiasm for teaching literacy using the pre-packaged materials that

the school district encouraged teachers to use. In her words, teaching that way was " boring". Further, Tirzah felt that as a teacher in a school that was comprised of a great number of general education students who struggled with learning to read and write, she needed to learn more about "strategies that work with low-achieving students" (Interview, 1994).

In order to protect their rights to confidentiality and in accordance with the research permission granted for this study by Michigan State University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects, pseudonyms (Marie and Tirzah) have been assigned to the teachers who participated in the study. Formal consent to conduct the study was obtained in writing from the two teachers prior to data collection.

Student Participants

Students who participated in the study were selected on the basis of their placement in the inclusion classroom that was co-taught by Marie and Tirzah. Table 1 lists the students who participated in the study and provides information related to gender, ethnicity, grade level, educational classification, prior instruction in the ELP curriculum, and how long each student was a member of the inclusion class. In accordance with the research permission granted for this study by Michigan State University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects, pseudonyms have been assigned to all students in order to protect their rights to confidentiality.

At the beginning of the school year, the class was a multi-grade arrangement comprised of 11 general education second grade students, 8 special education third grade students, and 3 special education fourth grade students. Due to some placement conflicts within the school and increased enrollments of second grade special education students throughout the school

Table 1: Student Participants

Student	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Educational Classification	Prior ELP Instruction	Student Mobility
Andrew	M	AA	3	SE/LD	X	⊕
Brandon	M	EA	2	GE		◻
Carmen	F	EA	3	SE/EI	X	◻
Charles	M	EA	2	SE/LD		Δ
Dustin	M	HP	2	SE/LD		Δ
Ellen	F	EA	2	SE/LD		Δ
Ethan	M	EA	2	GE		◻
Jack	M	EA	3	SE/LD		◻
Jasmine	F	AA	2	GE		◻
Jessie	F	AA	2	GE		◻
Jillian	F	EA	2	SE/LD		◻
Lionel	M	AA	2	SE/LD		◻
Melissa	F	EA	2	GE		◻
Miguel	M	HP	2	SE/LD		◻
Nicole	F	AA	3	SE/LD		◻
Pam	F	EA	3	SE/LD		◻
Phu	M	AS	2	GE		Δ
Priscilla	F	AA	3	SE/LD		Δ
Raeanne	F	EA	3	SE/LD	X	◻
Raymond	M	AA	2	SE/EI		Δ
Shannele	F	AA	3	SE/LD		◻
Tam	M	AS	3	SE/LD		◻
Tim	M	EA	3	SE/LD		⊕
Thomas	M	AA	2	SE/LD		Δ
Tyrone	M	AA	2	GE		◻
William	M	EA	2	GE		⊕

M	Male
F	Female
AA	African American
EA	European American
AS	Asian
HP	Hispanic
GE	General Education Student
SE/LD	Special Education Student/Learning Disabilities
SE/EI -	Special Education Student/Emotional Impairments
◻	Full year participation
Δ	Entered class mid-year or beyond
⊕	Left class mid-year or beyond

year, the configuration of students in the inclusion class underwent several changes. These changes were not surprising, given the average student mobility rate of 41% at Avon Elementary. Field data and literacy measures for the study were therefore collected on a total of 26 students (8 second grade general education students, 8 second grade special education students, 10 third grade special education students). There were two primary special education classifications represented in the inclusion class. Sixteen of the special education students were classified as having a learning disability (LD), and 2 special education students were classified as having an emotional impairment (EI). Although these two classifications were primary, two special education students were also suspected by the special education teacher as having attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The LD and EI classifications are described in greater detail in the next section.

The 15 male students and 11 female students who participated in the study represented a total of 4 ethnicity groups that included 12 European American students, 10 African American students, 2 Hispanic students, and 2 Asian students. Of the 26 students for whom data were collected, 16 students were full-year participants in the inclusion class, 7 students entered the inclusion class at mid-year or beyond, and 3 students left the inclusion class at mid-year or beyond. Three of the special education students participating in the study had received instruction in Marie's ELP classrom in the prior school year.

Special education classifications. The special education students who participated in the study qualified for services under one of the following two classifications: (1) learning disability/LD; or (2) emotional impairment/EI. The students were classified with these disabilities in accordance with the

federal definitions outlined in the 1997 Reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). As previously metioned, 16 of the 18 special education students who participated in the study are classified as having a learning disability. Lerner (1997 summarizes IDEA'S definition of learning disabilities as follows:

> (a) the individual has a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes. (These processes refer to mental abilities,such as memory, auditory perception, visual perception, oral language, and thinking.); (b) the individual has difficulty in learning, specifically, in speaking,listening, writing, reading (word-recognition skills and comprehension), and matehmatics (calculation and reasoning); (c) the problem is not primarily due to other causes, such as visual or hearing impairments; motor handicaps; mental retardation; emotional distrurbance; or economic, environmental, or cultural disadvantage; and (d) a severe discrepancy exist between the student's apparent potential for learning and his or her low level of achievement. In other words, there is evidence of underachievement (pp. 9-11).

Two of the special education students who participated in the study were classified as having an emotional impairment. Public Law 94-142 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 121a.5 defines an individual with emotional impairment in the following way:

> (a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or (e) a tendancy to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Permission to participate. Permission for students to participate in the study was obtained in writing from each student's parent or legal guardian prior to data collection. For new students who entered the class after data collection

had begun, permission forms were sent home promptly. Information about the study was communicated to the parents or legal guardians in the form of a letter that briefly described the nature of the research. In addition, permission to video-tape and audio-tape students was obtained from the parents or legal guardians. The form used to obtain permission to video-tape was a document that was customarily used by the school district in which the study took place. Permission to participate in the study was granted for all but one student.

Design

This was a case study of an elementary classroom, comprised of students with and without identified disabilities who were co-taught by a general education teacher and a special education teacher. As already described, a qualitative case study design was selected as the "method of choice" because of its potential to explore in greater depth the research questions described in Chapter One. As the students and teachers engaged in their daily classroom routines, the activities of the classroom, the literacy artifacts, the instructional interactions between teachers and students, and the related classroom dialogue were all documented and recorded in order to provide a rich description and holistic account of how the process of co-teaching and implemetation of the ELP curriculum evolved within the context of a full inclusion classroom.

Sampling. Because this was a case study guided by principles of naturalistic inquiry, where the goal was to shed light on the unique features of a particular processs as it unfolded in a particular setting, sample selection was not framed in terms facilitating generalization. "The naturalist begins with the assumption that the context is critical... each context is dealt with on its own terms" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200). Patton (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

describes six types of sampling that "serve purposes other than facilitating generalization" (p. 200). One of the six types of puposive sampling is maximum variation sampling, whose purpose is "to document unique variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200). In this study, maximum variation sampling, rather than random selection was the mode of choice because maximum variation sampling is based on "informational, not statistical considerations... its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200). In this study, maximum variation sampling yielded a sample classroom with variation in the following: (1) learner ability, (2) learner classification (special education, general education), (3) learner experience, (4) teacher experience and professional expertise, and (5) race and ethnicity.

Instrumentation. Yin (in Merriam, 1988) suggests that "case study is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context" (p. 10). Therefore, the instrument selected must be sensitive to as many of the contextual variables as possible in order to develop as authentic a description as possible. Further, in case studies that are embedded in naturalistic inquiry, the selected instrument must have the ability to adjust and fine tune its lens in situ, and in ways that will capture the unexpected. This can be best achieved by the researcher's decision to "use him - or herself as well as other humans as the primary data collection instruments" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). As Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe,

> ...it would be virtually impossible to devise a priori a nonhuman instrument with sufficient adaptablity to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered; because of the understanding that all instruments interact with respondents and objects but that only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction; because the

intrusion of instruments intervenes in the mutual shaping of other elements and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated only by a human (pp. 39-40).

Therefore, the instrument of choice for this study was the researcher herself (human-as-instrument). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), contextual inquiry demands a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the intermediate situation that will be encountered" (p. 187).

Data Collection

Time-line

Data collection for this study began during the second week in January and lasted through the first week of June. The researcher spent two mornings per week across five months in the inclusion classroom. In addition, several afternoon observations took place in order to look for evidence of how some of the literacy activities might be embedded across other content areas (i.e., social studies and science). The data collected for this study involved multiple sources that also included pre and post reading assessments that were administered to students in the inclusion classroom as part of the on-going research of the Early Literacy Project. Although systematic data collection for the study described in this chapter did not begin until January, results from the reading assessments eventually became part of the final case report for the study. The next section describes the data that were collected for the study.

Data Sources

Data collection involved direct observation, video-recording classroom events that centered around literacy activities and related instruction, conversations with students, interviewing the teachers, gathering student and

teacher artifacts, and administering pre and post literacy assessments to students in the class. In addition, the researcher met frequently with the teachers to discuss and explore issues that emerged from time to time and were relevant to the research questions guiding the study. Teachers' responses to these impromptu conversations were documented and also became part of the case report for the study. As previously mentioned, systematic data collection for this study began in January and lasted through the first week of June, however during ELP data collection in the fall the researcher had the opportunity to observe the inclusion classroom and on four occasions video-taped some of the ELP activities that were being implemented at that time (e.g., Morning News, Sharing Chair, Journal Writing, and Partner Reading). The initial observations of the inclusion classroom provided the researcher the opportunity to develop a "sense" for how the process of inclusion, co-teaching, and the implementation of the ELP activities began. These early observations also became part of the case report. The following sections describe the data collection procedures.

Field observations. Direct observation of the research site was central to the questions guiding this study. Junker (cited in Merriam, 1988) describes several stances that a researcher can assume in collecting observation data for a qualitative case study. One of these stances is referred to as "observer-as-participant" (p. 93). This stance is defined by the researcher's role in the context under study. In the case of observer-as-participant , "the researcher's observer activities are known to the group and are more or less publically sponsored by the people in the situation being studied" (Junker, cited in Merriam 1988, p. 93). Assuming the stance of observer-as-participant, "the researcher's participation in the group is definitely secondary to his or her role of information gatherer. Using this method, one may have access to many people and a wide range of

information, but the level of the information revealed is controlled by the group members being investigated" (Merriam, 1988, p. 93). Observer-as-participant was the method of choice for this study because the researcher was most interested in capturing a process as it unfolds, without influencing one way or the other the authenticity of naturally occuring events. In this case, the high levels of control that the group members had was not problematic because the focus of investigation was a "bounded system" (Smith, 1978); a primary goal of the investigation was to bring meaning to how a particular group of people, in a particular context functioned as a group.

Field observations of the research site involved classroom visits two mornings per week between the hours of 9:00 and 12:00 when literacy activities occurred. During these observations the researcher either sat at the back of the classroom, or circulated among the students in order to document in writing what was taking place in the classroom. When the focus for the day was on a particular literacy activity (e.g., Morning News, Sharing Chair, Peer-editing), the researcher would situate herself in closer proximity to the activity in order to capture and document as many of the nuances as possible.

The focus for observation was initially framed by the research questions that were described in Chapter One. Generally, these questions centered on (a) how the two teachers interacted to carry out the responsibilities of co-teaching and inclusion, and (b) how the students interacted and participated in this effort. As the study progressed however, certain patterns of behavior began to emerge and the researcher extended, and often refined the focus of investigation in order to accommodate these emerging patterns. As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, one of the powers of naturalistic inquiry, particularly when the data collection instrument is the researcher herself, is that one can make on-the-spot adjustments to how the research questions are framed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Unlike experimental design, naturalistic inquiry requires an on-going process of data analyses that is initiated shortly after data collection is underway (Merriam, 1988). A naturalistic investigator has the freedom to generate new questions and new assertions as they apply to emerging and unanticipated patterns of behavior. The next section describes how and what the researcher did to document field observations of the research site under investigation.

Note-taking. During classroom observations, the researcher engaged in intense note-taking, where she kept a running written account of the following: (1) a detailed description of the phyiscal environment, noting any changes from the last observation, (2) a detailed description of the activity being observed, (3) names of the participants and their respective roles in the activity, (4) frequency and duration of the activity, (5) sequencing of activities and transitions between activities, (6) informal, or unplanned activies that emerged, (7) direct quotations (or the substance) of what was being said (teacher-to-student, student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher interactions) and (8) a detailed description of teaching strategies being implemented.

Commentary. In addition to keeping a running written account of the items listed above, the researcher wrote comments in the margins of her field notes journal. These comments contained the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, and interpretations of what she observed. This gave the researcher the opportunity to develop some tentative hypotheses about the research questions under investigation; it also provided a framework for making assertions that would guide future observations and questioning (Merriam, 1988).

Video recording. The video-recording of classroom events also provides a critical source of information for this study. In addition to direct observation and note-taking, the researcher set up a video camera each time she visited the classroom. These video-taped sessions typically involved the recording of literacy activities such as (a) Morning News, (b) Sharing Chair, (c) Partner Reading, (d) Journal Writing, and (e) Writing Center. Occasionally, the researcher put aside the field notes journal in order to do the video-taping herself. This method enabled the researcher to activate the zoom lens of the camera when a student, the teacher, or a specific feature of the activity was of particular interest. Video-recording classroom events often enabled the researcher to fill in gaps in the field notes, to critically examine the nature of instructional dialogue during literacy activity, and to further explore interpretations and hunches that she developed as part of the on-going analysis of data.

Conversations with the teachers. An important strength of naturalistic inquiry is that it allows the researcher the freedom to explore important pieces of information as they emerge from the data. Thus, impromptu conversations with the teachers was another critical source of data for the study. From time-to-time during classroom visits, the researcher initiated on-the-spot interviews with the teachers. For example, during a literacy activity such as Author's Chair, the researcher might ask the teacher why she allowed students to pursue a particular line of questioning with the author. Another example of an on-the-spot interview might be prompted by a question that the teacher asks the researcher. These impromptu conversations, influenced by the moment-to-moment curiosities about how and why things happened in the ways they did provided the researcher with critical insights into the teachers' decision-making--one of the

important lines of questioning guiding this study. Like the video segments, these on-the-spot interviews were another way to fill in the gaps, and confirm or refute various assertions along the way. These conversations were either audio-taped or recorded in the researcher's field notes journal and provided important points of departure for future questioning and assertions.

Conversations with the students. Just as the moment-to-moment connversations with teachers provide important insights into teachers' instructional behavior and decision-making, impromptu conversations with students also have the potential to yield important information about how students make sense of their classroom experiences. As part of the data collection for this study, the researcher frequently initiated on-the-spot interviews with students. Examples of this took place during classroom observations where the researcher's attention was drawn to a particular student who was deeply engaged in a task, or a student who appeared disconnected from the rest of the class. In this study, the researcher often asked students questions like, "Will you explain to me why you're doing that?", "Why do your teachers let you work together?", or "Why have you chosen to do your work here?" Other conversations with students often centered around their writing and were sometimes initiated by the students themselves. For example, one student initiated a conversation with the researcher by showing her how he had used a "caret" so he could add more information to his story. These on-the-spot interviews and conversations with students provided the researcher with opportunities to clarify assertions and address questions as they presented themselves during the on-going process of data collection. During direct observation of classroom processes, it was critical to capture and document how participants themselves experience the process. As the researcher developed

some ideas about why participants behaved and interacted in the ways they did, she called upon the participants themselves to help her claify her interpretations of what she observed. In order to develop the most complete and holistic account of the process under investigation in this study, the researcher continuously identified ways to clarify ideas and search for alternative explanations for how and why things happened the way they did. The converations with students were either recorded in the researcher's field notes journal, or audio-taped for future reference.

Student and teacher artifacts. Artifacts that represent the work accomplished by students and teachers in the inclusion class also provide important contributions to the final case report. In this study, the researcher collected several artifacts that helped to clarify, confirm, and sometimes disconfirm tentatively-held hypotheses. In addition, classroom artifacts enrich the data, and like stories, bring life to the students and teachers in the study. Some examples of student artifacts include (a) students' writing portfolios, (b) class books written by the students, (c) students' daily writing journals, and (d) students' thematic reports. Teacher artifacts for example, include (a) teachers' instructional planning notes, (b) written outlines designating how students are grouped for instruction, and (c) written ideas on how to share what they're learning with other teachers and administrators.

Semi-structured interview of the teachers. In addition to the frequent teacher-researcher conversations that took place within the context of the classroom, the researcher also conducted a semi-structured interview with the teachers about mid-way through the school year. The researcher invited the two teachers to dinner at a local restaurant, and spent three hours talking with the

teachers about their experiences as co-teachers in an inclusion classroom. The semi-structured design of the interview allowed the interactions between the researcher and the teachers to flow more like a conversation rather than a question and answer format. The purpose of this interview was to gain a clearer perspective on the teachers' impressions of their co-teaching efforts. The questions primarily centered on what the teachers believed to be the most positive aspects of their co-teaching efforts; and also, what they believed to be the most critical areas for improvement. Information gathered from the interview not only contributed to the final case report, it also helped the researcher develop some assertions and tentative hypotheses that would be used to guide future observations and inquiry. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed for future reference.

Reading measure. As mentioned previously, a reading assessment was administered to students as part of the on-going research of the Early Literacy Project. Assessing students' reading performance was not only central to the ELP, the measures also yielded results that were important to the study described here. Therefore, as new students entered the class, the same reading assessments were administered to them. Students were adminstered the Slosson Oral Reading Test (Slosson, 1963) to estimate students' reading abilities based on recognition of basic sight words. Graded word lists were presented to students and data were maintained on the number of words accurately read. The results of the assessment of basic sight word recognition were analyzed according to how many words students accurately read (e.g., 1 point for each word accorately read). The scores were then converted to grade level scores.

Data Analysis

The following section first describes how each data source was organized in ways that would contribute to the development of the case report and the final stages of data analysis. Next, a description will follow that outlines how the case report was analyzed in order to develop an interpretative account of the research findings. The final discussion involves how the researcher established trustworthiness in the study. Figure 5 provides information on the data that were collected for the study, and the recursive process of data analysis.

Organizing the Data

The process of data organization began shortly after the research was underway. It was necessary to begin organizing data during the early phases of the study in order to initiate the on-going process of analysis. Unlike experimental research, qualitative research is distinguised by its data analysis procedures. Merriam (1988) describes these procedures as follows:

> Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to a refinement or reformulation of one's questions, and so on. It is an interactive process throughout which the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings (pp. 119-120).

Field notes. After each observation, the researcher reviewed the field notes and commentaries in order to gain insight and begin developing a general conceptual framework for making sense of what she was observing. Because the "process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (Merriam, 1988, p. 123), it was necessary at these early stages of data collection for the

THE INCLUSION CLASS
(FALL)

INFORMAL OBSERVATIONS
AND ADMINISTRATION OF
READING MEASURES

EARLY DATA
*Field Notes
*Video-tapes
*Conversations with Teachers
*Reading Measures

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

*Scored reading measures
*Viewed video tapes with ELP colleagues
*Recorded commentaries on videos
*Documented & recorded commentaries
  on what had been observed; looked for interesting patterns
*Generated questions to be explored beginning in January

THE INCLUSION CLASS

(JANUARY-JUNE)

FORMAL DATA
COLLECTION

DATA SOURCES

*Field Notes
*Video-tapes
*Conversations with Teachers
  and Students
*Classroom Artifacts
*Teacher Interview
*Reading Measures

THE RECURSIVE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

January >>>June
Initial readings of field notes and viewing of video tapes; making commentaries on what
was observed; looking for patterns; refining questions; making hunches; talking with
teachers and students to test plausibility of tentatively-held hypotheses; looking
for counter-examples; confirming & disconfirming hypotheses; sharing
and discussing data with colleagues; generating new questions;
scoring the literacy measures; looking for patterns; reflecting
on what was gathered from teacher and student artifacts;
looking for confirming or disconfirming evidence.

Chronological Organization of the Data
to Develop the Case Report

Thorough readings   Searching for   Identifying   Coding and Sorting   Exhausting
of the Case Report >   Regularities >   Categories >   Units of Data >   Categories

Interpretation >>> Theory Generation >>> Implications for Future Research

Figure 5. Stages of data collection and analysis.

researcher to become familiar with the data by engaging in a "conversation" with the field notes.

Just as the research questions provided a lens for classroom observations, the questions also provided a context for the researcher's initial readings of the field notes. This guided process led to the early identification of patterns that emerged across the field data. For example, it had been noted several times in the field notes that students in the class were encouraged by the teachers to first seek the help of a "friend" if they needed to clarify something that was confusing to them. Moreover, the expectation that students were capable of providing assistance to one another was frequently communicated to students. Relatedly, patterns of helping behavior were noted in several places in the field notes. For example, it had been noted that during Sharing Chair, if a student (the author) was having difficulty reading his text, another student would frequently stand close by, making herself readily available for assistance. It had also been noted that students voluntarily reached out to new students entering the class, in ways that informed newcomers about the routines of the classroom community. Further, the student-to-student dialogue during several literacy activities reflected a sense of joint ownership in problem-solving. These multiple observations of students helping other students provided important information that related to a central question about the nature of students' participation in the inclusion class. By framing the field observations with the research questions guiding the study, the researcher disciplined herself in ways that aligned with the primary goals of the study, and established a systematic procedure for planning subsequent data collection sessions (Bogden & Biklen, cited in Merriam, 1988). For example, the information gleaned from the field observations discussed above led to the following assertion: Teachers' expectations have a powerful influence on students' behavior. This particular assertion, as well as others that

were developed throughout data collection guided subsequent observations in order to test their plausibility.

As mentioned earlier, during the process of data collection and the initial stages of data analysis, items in the field notes journal that were of particular interest were noted and used to guide the focus of continued investigation. The researcher continued to reflect on each field observation, recording ideas, insights, and questions that emerged from the data. While much of this reflection was closely linked to the initial research questions guiding the study, continued reflection on the data that were collected through direct classroom observation also gave rise to new questions and provided a framework for more critical thinking about substantive issues. Thus, the researcher challenged herself to move beyond mere concrete description to a level of critical thinking characterized by "metaphors, analogies, and concepts" (Bogdan & Biklen, cited in Merriam, 1988, p 125). For example, continued observations of a student who chose to sit away from the rest of her peers might be documented in the field notes by simply describing how the student behaved in her self-selected location. The researcher might prematurely conclude that this student was not actively participating in the learning community. However, by "rais[ing] concrete relations and happenings observed in a particular setting to a higher level of abstraction (p. 125), and by "play[ing] with metaphors, analogies, and concepts" (p. 125), the researcher might, drawing on other theories about community, and subsequent teacher-to-student interactions, transcend the raw data and develop a tentative hypothesis that participation at the periphery might also be a legitimate form of community membership in an inclusion setting (see Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this way, inquiry becomes a reciprocal process whereby questions shape what is observed, and observations shape a new set of questions.

Video tapes. Video tapes were labeled directly after taping (date, time, name of activity, participants) and viewed by the researcher within the same week of taping. Corresponding field notes and the researcher's commentaries were initially used as a guide for viewing the tapes. During the initial viewings of the tapes, the researcher took notes on what she observed. At this stage the tapes were prioritized. Tapes that were more significant in terms of content and alignment with the research questions guiding the study were entered onto a log sheet, and the remaining tapes were put aside for future reference. In subsequent viewings of the first priority tapes the reseacher used her initial notes as a framework for a more critical examination of each video tape. However, during subsequent viewings of the tapes, certain instances were noted that did not directly relate to the initial research questions, yet provided important information about the process under investigation. In these cases, the researcher noted any patterns and used this as a basis for extending the inquiry and future observation. Throughout the viewing process, any patterns that emerged across the video data were noted on separate sheets of paper, along with supporting examples. Several of the tapes were also viewed by the researcher's colleagues and mentor during ELP staff meetings. These viewings provided the researcher opportunities to discuss her ideas and initial interpretations and receive feedback from those who were most knowledgeable about the ELP curriculum and the research questions guiding the present study. This process of sharing the data with colleagues also led to issues and questions that had not yet been considered by the researcher.

Conversations with the teachers and students. As discussed earlier, impromptu conversations with the teachers and students were generally documented in the field notes, and occasionally audio-taped depending on the

nature of the question and whether or not the researcher was talking with one student or a group of students. The audio tape provided a back up in the event that the researcher needed clarity when re-visiting the field notes. The researcher made note in the field notes journal if a tape was available for that particular instance. During the initial readings of the field notes, the researcher needed to transcribe only two of the taped segments to clarify what she had recorded in her field notes journal. The documented conversations with teachers and students were highlighted in the field notes journal and were generally preceded by the question that the researcher had asked the teacher(s) or student(s). During the initial readings of the field notes, documented conversations that supported emerging patterns were coded for future analysis.

Teacher and student artifacts. The teacher and student artifacts that were collected throughout the study were labeled, dated, and sorted and stored in plastic square bins for future reference. Student portfolios were organized with hanging files, and included the students' daily journals, thematic writing folders, and samples of other writing (e.g., expository texts). Also, throughout data collection the researcher would frequently note in her field notes journal, "See (student's name) journal entry dated (the date)". In this way, interpretations about a student artifact could be drawn in ways that took into account the context in which the artifact evolved. Similarly, many teacher artifacts were organized chronologically in terms of how they related to what was documented in the field notes. For example, early in the study the teachers were making changes in some of their instructional grouping arrangements due to several new students entering the class. Along with what the researcher documented in her field notes journal, a copy of the teachers' written plan was also included at that place in the field notes.

Interview data. The audio-taped teacher interview was transcribed. After an initial reading, the researcher responded to the interview by noting the most salient ideas that emerged. This first set of ideas provided an outline for several more readings of the interview. Notes were taken during subsequent readings, and pieces of the dialogue were color coded to highlight and identify areas of significance, particulary as they related to patterns that had emerged from the field observations and other relevant data. At this stage, the researcher was able to confirm or disconfirm hunches she held regarding some of the major questions that guided the interview. When the researcher needed clarification on an idea or an issue that had been documented in the interview, she made note of it and asked follow-up questions of the teachers at a later date.

Analyzing the Case Report

As mentioned in the previous section, the data gathered from direct observation, video-taping, conversations with teachers and students, classroom artifacts, and informal measures of students' reading and writing performance over time yielded important information for this study. Field notes, commentaries, and notes on emerging patterns were organized chronologically and compiled to form the case report-- a descriptive account of the inclusion process under investigation.

Searching for regularities. The final analysis began with several thorough readings of the case report, searching first for regularities across the data-- things that happend frequently. As regularities were identified, they were transfomed into categories and labeled. In one case, several classroom examples, as well as examples from interview data illustrate a regularity in the ways that the teachers viewed their students and similarly, in the ways that

students viewed themselves as experts and informants to other members of the classroom community. Therefore, this regularity became a category and was labeled "Students as Experts". This process of searching for regularities continued; after several categories had been developed, units of data were coded and sorted and put into the appropriate category. In cases where units of data overlapped across identified categories, some categories were collapsed. In this way the researcher worked to develop categories that were heterogeneous and mutually exclusive; and categories where the data units within were internally homogeneous and exhaustive (Merriam, 1988). For units of data that didn't fit indentified categories, new categories were developed. This enabled the researcher to push past her current thinking and remain open to exploring new ideas and tentative theories (Merriam, 1988).

Searching for counter examples. A primary goal for this study is to provide readers with a theoretical framework for thinking about the process of inclusion. To to this, it was necessary, as discussed previously, to identify patterns and regularities in the data that would eventually lead to a credible theory. However, qualitative, or holistic inquiry must consider the entire picture in order to capture a realistic account. Therefore, it was necessary for the researcher to also search for examples that ran counter to her tentatively held hypotheses that were derived from the data. One example of this was when evidence that emerged from various data sources led the researcher to believe that students in the inclusion class valued cooperative group work over other forms. However, as the researcher continued to test this hypothesis during subsequent observations and conversations with students, a few examples that ran counter to this idea were noted. While these counter examples did not alter the fact that cooperative group work was a highly valued activity in the inclusion

class, the few examples that ran counter to this notion might be important places to push ourselves to think more critically about students' resistance to cooperative learning formats. This is particularly important for research on inclusion, since cooperative learning falls under the umbrella of "best practices", and is an instructional format that inclusion teachers are encouraged to use (see Jenkins et al., 1991).

Establishing Trustworthiness

The researcher's concern for producing a qualitative case study that is trustworthy is founded on a central question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In experimental or quantitative research, trustworthiness is established by means of (a) internal validity, (b) external validity, (c) reliability, and (d) objectivity. These concepts however, are not appropriate for the study described in this chapter because a "qualitative approach to research is based upon different assumptions and a different worldview than traditional research" (Merriam, 1988, p. 183). Instead, Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose a different set of criteria to establish trustworthiness in a qualitative study. In qualitative research, internal validity is replaced with "credibility"; external validity is replaced with "transferability"; reliability is replaced with "dependability"; and objectivity is replaced with "confirmability" (p. 219). The next section describes how the researcher used the qualiative criteria outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985) to establish trustworthiness in the study described in this chapter.

Credibility. The degree of credibility in this study was increased by the following: (1) prolonged engagement with the research site (5 months of long-

term observation), (2) triangulation of data, using multiple methods and data sources to confirm emerging findings and interpretations (e.g., field notes, video recordings, classroom artifacts, interviews), (3) peer examination, where colleagues were asked to comment on emerging findings and the researcher's interpretations, and (4) member checks, where the researcher shared her interpretations with the teacher participants in order to determine the plausibilty of the results.

Transferability. The degree of transferability in this study was increased by the following: (1) obtaining a rich, thick description of the research site, and (2) establishing the "typicality" of the case, by comparing the case studied to others in the same class (i.e., this inclusion program compared to other inclusion programs).

Dependability and confirmability. The degree of dependability and confirmability in this study was increased by the following: (1) a thorough explanation of the investigator's position (i.e., theory and assumptions behind the study, basis for site and participant selection, social context from which the data were collected); (2) triangulation, where multiple methods of data collection were incorporated into the study, and (3) audit trail, where a description is provided that outlines in detail "how the data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 172).

Conclusion

A qualitative case study method was appropriate for this research because the goal of the study was to gain insight into the collaborative

implementation of an integrated literacy curriculum for students with and without mild disabilites who were taught side-by-side in an inclusion classroom. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gather data from multiple sources and to capture many of the contextual features of this particular process of co-teaching and curriculum implementation. In turn, the researcher was able to generate several hypotheses along the way that related to literacy learning in inclusion classrooms, co-teaching models, the merger of general education and special education resources and expertise, and the process of inclusion. The goal for the study then, was to develop a theoretical framework for guiding future research that seeks to better understand what it is that teachers need and what it is that students with disabilities need in order to benefit from inclusion programs.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHERS' COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION
IN THE INCLUSION PROCESS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter describes the co-teachers' participation in the inclusion

process and their collaborative implementation of the ELP curriculum. The first

set of research questions described in Chapter One guide the discussion. This

set of questions sought to examine the process of inclusion in terms of how the

two teachers in this study negotiated their instructional roles within the context of

inclusion, and how the teachers collaborated to implement a literacy curriculum

that encompassed the ELP principles and activities described in Chapter Two.

The first section of the chapter draws on data collected through informal

interviews and conversations with the teachers early in the school year, and

describes the teachers' initial contributions to the process of inclusion and to

their co-teaching relationship. Highlighted in this section are the professional

goals and areas of expertise that each teacher brought to co-teaching.

In the next section, the discussion is framed by the first set of research

questions that examined how the co-teachers negotiated their instructional roles

in the inclusion classroom. This section provides a discussion on the early

stages of co-teaching, describing (a) the introduction of the co-teaching

arrangement to students, parents, and the larger school community, and (b) the teachers' collaborative implementation of the ELP curriculum.

Co-teaching Underway:
Teachers' Initial Contributions to the Process

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) propose that responsible inclusion requires school personnel to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their vision and goals for inclusion. Further, responsible inclusion is student-centered, recognizing that inclusion programs must be developed around the unique instructional needs of each student. Relatedly, Cook and Friend (1995) suggest that one of the critical guidelines for effective co-teaching involves teachers' early opportunities to "clarify what they each hope to accomplish by using this approach to meet student needs, particularly because it places new demands on the adults involved and requires them to reconsider their professional roles" (p. 3).

Complementary Goals for Co-teaching

During my fall visits to the inclusion class, I met frequently with the teachers, Marie and Tirzah to talk with them about the early stages of their co-teaching. On September 23rd, I met with the teachers after school during their planning session. These early conversations with the teachers helped me to develop a picture of how their co-teaching began to evolve. During this particular conversation, Marie and Tirzah talked about their personal reasons for wanting to co-teach with each other.

First, Marie explained that she was most confident in the power of the ELP curriculum and its potential impact in a general education setting. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, many of Marie's former attempts to implement various ELP activities in some of the general education classrooms at Avon School had been short-lived. Nevertheless, Marie still believed that it was her responsibility as a special education teacher to share information about the ELP curriculum with other teachers. Marie's primary goal for co-teaching was two-fold.

Marie first explained that she wanted to have an opportunity to share her knowledge of the ELP curriculum with a general education teacher who was "open to learning and trying new things in the classroom". Marie described Tirzah as "energetic" and "willing to take risks in her teaching". Marie also shared that although Tirzah often had many low-achieving students in her general classroom, "she only referred one student for special education during the time she has been at Avon". Perhaps this is due to the fact, as Tirzah stated later in a February 9 interview that, "at Avon, it's a hard group of kids... you could qualify a lot of them [for special education]".

A second goal for co-teaching involved Marie's curioisity about how the literacy activities that formed the ELP curriculum might impact reading and writing achievement in a more integrated group of students. Marie was interested in seeing how her ELP special education students from the previous year would perform in a larger, and presumably more demanding setting, given their former success with the ELP curriculum. In a prior interview that was

conducted as part of the Early Literacy Project research, Marie expressed

serious reservations about returning her special education students to general

education classrooms that did not provide the same rich literacy experiences and

instructional support that her ELP students had experienced in her special

education classroom. During an interview in June, 1993, Marie asked , "Is there

any way to apprentice some of the general education teachers?" Marie stated

that learning the ELP curriculum "comes from modeling"...where you go into a

classroom and teach that way and let that person observe you doing it... and

then you support them while they are trying to do it". She concluded "...that is

how change happens... because a lot of times if [teachers] don't see it, they don't

really know how to do it." Thus, it appeared that Marie's former collaborative

involvement with the larger ELP community, where teachers continually shared

and modeled their ideas for each other, had an important influence on the value

Marie placed on collaborative activity and professional apprenticeship as an

avenue for instructional change.

 During our September 23 conversation, Tirzah also expressed clear ideas

about what she wanted to accomplish professionally as part of the co-teaching

arrangement. Although Tirzah emphasized her own accountability for all

students regardless of their learning challenges, she nevertheless felt that she

lacked the strategies for helping her low-achieving students learn to read. Tirzah

explained that she had become aware of the kinds of literacy activities that Marie

had been integrating into her special education teaching as part of her

collaborative work on the Early Literacy Project. More importantly, as she paid

occasional visits to Marie's classroom, Tirzah stated that she had witnessed

Marie's students' marked enthusiasm about the reading and writing activities that

they were doing, particularly those activities that required students to write and

publish expository reports.

Tirzah explained that her primary goal for co-teaching with Marie was to

develop a more effective repetoire of instructional methods for working with what

she referred to as, "hard-to-teach kids". She reported that the skills-based

literacy methods that she had used were "boring" for her, as well as for her

students. Tirzah added that her recent integration of a more "whole langauge"

approach was also not meeting the needs of her students. Thus, Tirzah

expressed disappointment with her past methods, and believed that her students

were not profitting from her reading instruction. During the inclusion year, Tirzah

was looking to Marie for guidance. In Tirzah's words, "I want to learn how to do

what [Marie] is doing".

Clearly, Tirzah believed that it was her professional responsibility to

ensure that all students learn. Unlike many teachers who expect students to

conform to the rigors of the mainstream curriculum, Tirzah expressed an interest

in improving her own literacy instruction as a means for addressing her students'

reading challenges, and reflected the notion that teachers too must learn more

effective ways to negotiate the instructional demands of more diverse

classrooms.

As I talked with the teachers early in the school year, both Marie and

Tirzah openly shared their goals for co-teaching. In many ways, these early

conversations helped to situate what would soon be an on-going professional

dialogue centered on literacy principles, instruction, and curriculum development-

- a dialogue that many educators have reported as seldom taking place between

special and general education teachers attempting to implement inclusion

programs(Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Tarrant, 1993).

Recognizing the Value of a Colleague's Expertise

One of the obstacles to developing more effective instructional

partnerships between special and general educators involves teachers'

recognition that they each can contribute in valuable ways to the curriculum

(Zigmond & Baker,1995; Jenkins et al., 1991; & Tarrant, 1993). Although the

teachers in this study articulated goals that seemed to reflect an expert-novice

model whereby Marie was to apprentice Tirzah in the implementation of the ELP

curriculum, it became clear in other conversations with the teachers that they

both acknowledged and valued the unique strengths and expertise that the other

brought to the co-teaching relationship. While the development of the inclusion

program was centered around Marie's deep knowledge of literacy principles and

practices and how she might presumably lead Tirzah's development in those

areas, Marie also valued the knowledge and skills that Tirzah brought to their

collaborative partnership, recognizing that she too would benefit.

Marie valued Tirzah's skills at classroom management. During our

conversation on September 23, Marie reported that Tirzah always demonstrated

"respect for her students" and that she was skillful at creating a cooperative

atmosphere where she "seldom experienced discipline problems". In fact, Tirzah also made reference to the issue of discipline in a later interview on February 9, where she explained to me how many teachers in the school would frequently ask her, "How do you get your kids to behave like that"? Tirzah's response to this when I asked her the same question was, "I keep them working". It's interesting to note that in an earlier ELP interview with Marie, she shared a similar belief about keeping students engaged. In Marie's words, "we have to get rid of that down time."

Another area that Marie frequently mentioned during our informal exchanges early in the school year involved Tirzah's organizational skills in the classroom. Marie explained how skillfully Tirzah made things clear for students and modeled organizational strategies for them. In a later interview on Feb 9, Marie pointed out that Tirzah's organizational skills had a positive impact on what they were trying to accomplish as co-teachers, stating that "...routine, organization, and predictability is really good for special education kids".

Having formerly taught in the primary grades, Tirzah also came to the co-teaching arrangement with an extensive knowledge about phonics instruction. Although Tirzah expressed a dislike for an exclusively skills-based approach to teaching reading, Marie recognized this as an area of expertise for Tirzah, and also viewed this knowledge as contributing to a comprehensive literacy curriculum. In Marie's words, "...our kids need that kind of stuff, too". Further, Marie reported that Tirzah taught phonics by incorporating motivating activities that students responded to enthusiastically. During an October 12 conversation,

Marie attributed this to Tirzah's "creative flair" and her genuine desire to make learning fun for students.

In summary, one of the challenges in implementing successful inclusion programs is how to build on the expertise of both special and general educators. Each member must have a critical role in the classroom as well as in the instructional components of program development. For many special and general educators attempting to develop teaching partnerships, the negotiation of these instructional roles has been problematic. Far too often, partnerships with general education have meant occasional visits by the special education teacher to the general classroom where the special education teacher assumes the role of "assistant" to the classroom teacher, seldom having opportunites to engage in conversation with the general education teacher around critical issues involving curriculum goals and instruction.

The beginning of Marie and Tirzahs' professional partnership was unique because they began their co-teaching challenge with a clear vision of what they each hoped to accomplish, and the recognition of what each teacher would potentially contribute to an inclusion program and to each other's professional development. Having become generally familiar with each other's classroom practices prior to the implementation of the inclusion program, Marie and Tirzah appear to have begun their co-teaching with an advantage. While both Marie and Tirzah explained to me during a conversation on November 5, that their potential success as co-teachers would probably be due to the fact, as Tirzah stated, "we get along really well", their demonstrated mutual respect for each

other's professional role and contributions to the inclusion process, as well as their complementary strengths, may provide stronger evidence of a solid foundation for effective co-teaching. Figure 6 provides an illustration of the beginning stages of Marie and Tirzah's co-teaching partnership, highlighting what each teacher brought to the inclusion process.

The next section first discusses how the co-teachers began the school year, describing the teachers' early connections with students and parents. This is followed by a description of how the teachers organized their literacy instruction around students' diverse needs by implementing a station teaching model. Finally, a description of the implementation of several ELP activities illustrates how the literacy curriculum began to take shape during the first several weeks of the school year.

The Inclusion Process Unfolds
New Roles for Teachers: New Roles for Students

Segregated programs for special education students have typically disenfranchised students from the larger school community. Further, when special education students, especially those with mild disabilities, are only mainstreamed into non-academic general education classes (e.g., gym, art, homeroom) it often prevents special education students from meaningfully connecting with and contributing to the general education classroom. Consequently, this fragmented school experience influences how special education students perceive their role in the larger context of a learning
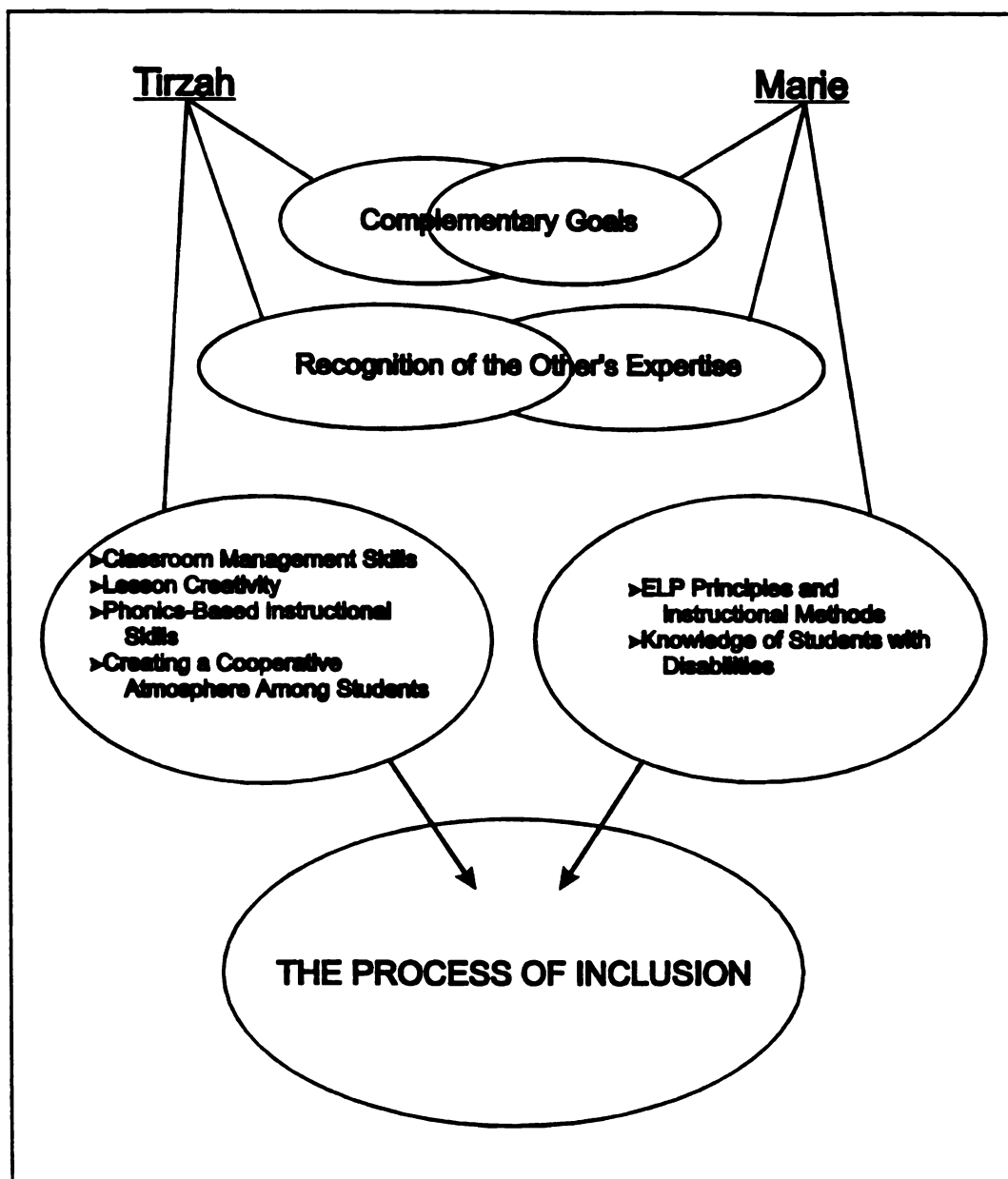
Figure 6. The beginning stages of the co-teaching partnership.

community, as well as how they perceive the role that general education plays in their learning (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989).

Educators involved in school restructuring efforts such as inclusion must not only be sensitive to the the challenges that teachers face as they attempt to negotiate new roles in the school community, they must consider how the blending of programs might initially present some confusion to special education students about the roles and responsibilities of the two teachers for instruction. In the present study, the first research question that sought to examine how the co-teachers negotiated their roles in the inclusion classroom involved several sub-questions. Two related sub-questions involved how the co-teachers presented themselves to students and parents, and how students perceived each teacher's role in the classroom.

Who Is the Teacher?

During one of my conversations with Marie and Tirzah in the fall (October 26), I asked the teachers what it had been like the first day of school. Specifically, I asked them how they introduced themselves to their students. Tirzah responded first, stating that she simply said to the students, "This is Mrs. M., and I am Mrs. T., and we are your teachers." According to Marie, initially the students didn't question the fact that they had two teachers, since many of them had already been accustomed to seeing more than one teacher in the school day (e.g., speech teacher, bi-lingual teacher, librarian). Marie did share that the special education students that she had had the previous year were a little

puzzled at first, yet became comfortable with the arrangement as time went on. Marie further explained, however, that special education students who had not been in her classroom the year before just assumed that the inclusion class was their special education class. In Marie's words, "they didn't clue in to what was going on."

During our conversation on October 26, Marie said that she and Tirzah explained to students on the first day of school that, "we will be using two classrooms and we will be doing lots of things together... and sometimes you will need help with different things...sometimes you will get help from Mrs. T., and sometimes you will get help from Mrs. M."

The co-taught classroom at Avon School was a new idea for parents as well. I asked Tirzah how they informed the parents of this arrangement. Tirzah explained that she and Marie sent a letter home to the parents during the first week of school. The letter, initiated by Tirzah, described the teaching arrangement and idenitifed it as an "inclusion class." When I asked the teachers if any of the parents made objections to this, they each replied "no", and Tirzah stated that "most of [the parents] were probably glad that their kids were getting extra help" (conversation, 10/26/93).

The inclusion class was also publicized in the larger school community. Initially, the school news letter sent to parents during the first week of school described various things that were to happen at Avon School in the upcoming year; this included a description of Tirzah and Marie's classroom. The news letter referred to their room as the "inclusion class" and described it as having

both special and general education students, and a special and general

education teacher in the room at all times. Further, at a December 3 school

assembly on "cultural diversity", the principal also described to parents the

unique features of Marie and Tirzah's classroom. As Marie and Tirzah's

students arrived on stage to read the reports they had written on Native

Americans, the principal introduced them as follows:

> Next, Mrs. T's and Mrs. M's class will be reading their reports on Native
> Americans. This year at Avon, we have an inclusion class that is taught
> by Mrs. T, who is the regular education teacher, and Mrs. M, who is the
> special education teacher. In the inclusion class, special education
> students and regular education students are all together.

Student Perceptions

Although the inclusion and co-teaching arrangement was presented to

students and parents in a way that suggested that the teachers had parallel roles

in the classroom, I was interested to learn more about how the students in the

inclusion class initially perceived each teacher's role in the classroom.

During some impromptu conversations with students on November 10, I initially

determined that most of the special education students viewed the teachers as

having similar roles in the classroom. For example, when I asked students,

"Who is your teacher?", nine out of the twelve special education students

responded that they had "two teachers"-- Mrs. M. and Mrs. T. The other three

special education students told me that "Mrs. M." (special education) was their

teacher. It is interesting to note that the three special education students who

viewed Mrs. M. as their primary teacher were the students who had Marie as their teacher the previous year. In fact, in a February 9 interview with the teachers, Marie stated that her returning students frequently asked her during the first week of school, "When do we come to your room?"

When I asked seven of the general education students the same question, six of them identified both Mrs. M. and Mrs. T. as their teachers, and one student identified Mrs. T, (general education) as his teacher, but added that "Mrs. M. teaches me stuff, too."

During a February 9 interview with the teachers, I asked Marie and Tirzah how the students perceived their respective roles in the classroom. Again, Marie shared that it was difficult for her returning special education students to get used to the idea that "they didn't have to go anywhere". Similarly, as transfer special education students entered the class at later times throughout the school year, they too experienced a little confusion. In Marie's words, "It was like the first week of school all over again." For example, Marie shared with me that when Tim transferred from another school district in November, he stated very matter-of-fact on his first day at Avon, "I'm in special ed, so I'll need to be coming to you... so when does that start?"

Marie explained during our interview that during the first semester, even though all the students' desks were arranged in a mixed fashion (special and general education students altogether in clusters of four) in Tirzah's side of the room, the special education students frequently asked Marie, "Don't we have to come over [to your room] now?" I found this interesting, considering the fact that

all the desks were labeled with the students' names, and that their desks held all

their books and materials. Marie did explain in the February 9 interview that

most of the students had become comfortable with the co-teaching arrangement

by January. Marie stated, "Now they don't even question it... whenever we do

anything they all say they have two teachers and they just do... they really

believe that, you know."

During this same February interview, Tirzah also commented that while

most of the students viewed themselves as having two teachers, certain students

were drawn to her and certain students to Marie in terms of moral support and

matters of discipline. Tirzah stated that "some [students] will open up more to

me and some will open up to Marie." For example, explained Tirza, "Shannelle

will tell me things... and will not tell Marie... she's embarrassed to death." Marie

added, "Then there's the other kids, like Andrew...he might be yelling out and I'll

come stand by the doorway and I'll just look at him.. because I had him last year,

he knows." The two teachers compared their co-teaching partnership to the

dynamics in parenting, where one parent may provide support for some things,

and the other parent provides support in different areas.

Although most of the special education students in the inclusion class

perceived themselves has having two teachers, many expected that the special

education teacher was to assume primary responsibility for their instruction. This

was not surprising, given the fact that few of them had been mainstreamed into

general education classes for subjects other than what this district referred to as

"generic classes" (e.g., art, gym, music, library). While the initial question sought

to examine how the *teachers'* roles were perceived by students, it soon became evident that the special education *students* had also defined their own role in the school community. Thus, special education students' initial confusion about the instructional roles and responsibilities of the two teachers indicated as well that special education students were somewhat resistent to taking on a new role in the inclusion setting. The next section describes how the co-teachers negotiated their instructional roles in the classroom, illustrating how the teachers' early alignment with instructional responsibility for literacy may have also provided an opportunity for the special education students in the class to begin to identify new roles for themselves.

Putting Together a Literacy Curriculum: What Will You Teach, What Will I Teach?

Another concern about how special and general educators might effectively work together within the context of inclusion programs involves how, and for whom each teacher assumes instructional responsibility (Jenkins et al., 1991; Zigmond & Baker, 1995; Pugach & Wesson, 1995). A related sub-question involving the teachers' negotiation of roles in the classroom concerned the way in which the co-teachers assumed instructional responsibility for literacy. The data collected from early conversations with the teachers suggested that Marie and Tirzah recognized the unique contributions that each would make to the process of inclusion and co-teaching. The initial division of instructional labor in the inclusion class was organized in a way that allowed both Marie and Tirzah

to initially implement literacy components with which each of them was comfortable and familiar. Thus, during the early stages of co-teaching, each teacher took the lead on particular literacy activities in the classroom. At the same time, the teachers made decisions about how the students in the class would be grouped for instruction.

Instructional Need as a Basis for Grouping: Station Teaching

Cook and Friend (1995) suggest that a Station Teaching model is one way for co-teachers to effectively deliver instructional content to a diverse group of learners. Further, students benefit from this arrangement because it provides a lower teacher-pupil ratio. Moreover, Cook and Friend (1995) explain that station teaching reduces special education students' feelings of alienation because "students with disabilities can be integrated into all the groups instead of being singled out" (p. 6). The authors also suggest that because both teachers in the classroom have active teaching roles, "equal teacher status in the classroom is not a concern" (p. 6).

During my early visits to the inclusion classroom in the fall, I observed what Marie and Tirzah referred to as "rotations". The rotations were based on a Station Teaching model where students rotated during designated blocks of time to various teaching locations in the classroom. For example, during the morning rotations on October 26, I observed small groups of students rotating among five different planned activities. A timer had been set by Tirzah, and every 20

minutes the timer sounded, indicating to students that they had to rotate to their next station.

One group of students that I observed was working with Mrs. R., the classroom volunteer. Mrs. R. and five students were seated around a large oval table in the hallway just outside Marie's door. Using flashcards with words printed on them, Mrs. R. reviewed some of the new vocabulary that the students would encounter in the story they were to read together from their basal texts. Inside the classroom, I observed four more groups of students. A second group of three students was sitting around a large kidney-shaped table with Marie. At this table, Marie and the three students choral read a story from their basal text. Each student, as well as Marie, used a manila bookmark to follow the text. Their reading was occasionally interrupted, as Marie and the students raised questions and made comments about what was taking place in the story. A third group of students worked on spelling activities at individual computers. The spelling activities were teacher-designed based upon the words in the weekly spelling unit. A fourth group of students sat around another kidney-shaped table approximately twenty feet from the computers. At this station, Tirzah led a flash card activity where students were first required to call out the word on the card, and then provide another word that meant the "same as" the word on the card. The final group of students in the classroom were all seated at their own desks. Each of these students was engaged in what the teachers and students referred to as "seatwork". The seatwork rotation required students to either finish work that they had begun at an earlier time, or to write in their journals. During this

rotation for example, I observed two students working on an assigment from their spelling books, while a third student wrote in her journal.

The rotations appeared quite organized, and students seemed to know where they were to go each time the timer sounded. Posted on the chalkboard on Tirzah's side of the classroom was a schedule indicating how the individual groups were to rotate. Each group was identified by a color word. For example, one group of students was referred to as the "Purple" group. The group schedule listed the name of the group, the order of rotation (i.e., 1, 2, 3, and so on), and where that group was to move at the designated time. Occasionally, when the timer sounded, some students appeared a little confused, as if not knowing where they were to go. Tirzah calmly reminded students to "look at the board and find your color ". Figure 7 provides an illustration of how the rotation schedule operated. The capital letters denote the group (e.g., G equals green, B equals blue, and so on), and the numbers indicate the order that the group was to follow.

	1	2	3	4	5
Mrs. R	Y	O	G	P	B
Seatwork	B	Y	O	G	P
Computers	P	B	Y	O	G
Mrs. M	G	P	B	Y	O
Mrs. T	O	G	P	B	Y

Figure 7. The rotation schedule for station teaching.

Later in the day on October 26, I asked Tirzah and Marie how the rotation arrangement was working out for them. Marie explained to me that the rotations allowed her and Tirzah to work in "closer proximity" to students. She went on to explain that many of the students needed "more focused" instruction, and that their larger group time didn't always provide that.

By this time, having conducted some of the reading assessments as part of my work on the Early Literacy Project, I was familar with the students in the class who were identified for special education. During my observation of the rotation groups, it was interesting to note that special education students were not separated, but rather, each group was typically a blend of both general and special eduction students. When I commented on this, Tirza confidently explained that the groups were not set up according to, "...these are the special ed kids and these are the regular kids...". She stated that "friends", as she called all the students, "are all mixed together" in the groups.

Having not been present during the initial planning stages for the rotation groups, I was interested in learning how the teachers made decisions about forming the groups for instruction. I asked the teachers what criteria they used to group the students. Marie explained to me that the students were initially grouped according to how they scored on the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT). As discussed in Chapter Three, The SORT had been adminsitered to all students at the beginning of the year. Marie explained that students' reading fluency was also a determining factor. Early in the school year, Marie and Tirzah listened to individual students read in order to determine where they might fall

into a group. Using these initial criteria, students were grouped according to similar instructional needs, and not according to their educational label (i.e., special education, general education).

A New Perspective on Ability Grouping

My initial reactions to the grouping arrangements of students triggered some thoughts about ability grouping. One of my questions involved how students might identify themselves with the particular group to which they had been assigned. For example, many traditional formats that group students according to reading ability have fallen under attack due to concerns about student tracking. Oftentimes, once students are placed in a particular reading group, they remain in that group throughout the school year. A familar question that students (especially low-achieving students) frequently ask each other (e.g., What book are you in?) suggests the notion that students often distinguish their position in the literacy community based on the reading group in which they have been placed. As I continued to observe how the rotation groups functioned as a means for organizing and delivering literacy instruction, I sought to gather more information about the status and function of ability groups in the inclusion classroom.

During the next several weeks of observation, I noticed that the groups had changed somewhat in terms of their membership. For instance, when I observed the class on December 7, I noticed that Andrew was no longer a member of the Green group, John had been moved to the Yellow group, and

Priscilla left the Green group to join students in the Blue group. Interested in the dynamics of these particular groups, I approached Marie. I first asked her why she and Tirzah decided to group students according to their ability. I also asked her why some students had been moved to a different group. Marie then shared her perspective on ability groups. In Marie's words, "ability grouping has gotten a bad name." According to Marie, "the groups [in our classroom] are always changing, you know." She went on to explain that when Andrew, a student she had the previous year in her ELP classroom, first started out the semester, he was "still really low." However, Marie went on to explain that "things finally started to click with [Andrew]." Marie explained that Andrew had become a leader in his group and that things had become too easy for him. In Marie's words, "I had to move him." Similarly, as the school year progressed, the instructional grouping of students continued to reflect a dynamic process where Marie and Tirzah's assessment of individual students' progress toward literacy goals guided their instructional planning and decision-making.

The early implementation of the station teaching model and rotation groups provided a way for the co-teachers to address the diverse instructional needs of their students. Further, the smaller student-to-teacher ratio allowed each teacher the opportunity to begin to develop an instructional relationship with all students in the class. Thus, the teachers were able to establish more parallel teaching roles that placed them in close contact with all the students in the classroom. Moreover, small group instruction provided the teachers with

more frequent opportunities to engage in the individual assessment of students' literacy performance.

Situating the Components of the ELP Curriculum

By late October, the ELP curriculum had also begun to take shape, and all of the activities were being implemented in the inclusion classroom on a regular basis. The next sections describe the nature of the ELP curriclum and what each activitiy entailed.

Partner Reading. The teachers used DEAR time as a way to first introduce partner reading. DEAR time was a school-wide activity where students and teachers were encouraged to "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR). Both Marie and Tirzah had gathered an assortment of reading material that spanned a diverse range of reading ability and content (e.g., the Wright Group books, trade books, poetry books, patterned books, basals). Many of the reading materials were from Marie's classroom collection that she had gathered during her previous collaborative work on the Early Literacy Project. During my early visits to the classroom in the fall, I observed a rich display of the reading materials that filled the bookshelves and lined the chalk rails in all areas of the inclusion classroom.

During DEAR time, Tirzah and Marie initially paired students with similar reading levels to read with one another. On four different occasions during my fall visits to the classroom (9-23, 10-6, 11-8, and 12-6) I observed pairs of students either cuddled together in large bean bag chairs in the corner, or

scattered across the carpeted areas of the classroom engaged in the shared reading of a book. Frequently, special education and general education students were paired together.

For Partner Reading, Marie explained that she and Tirzah initially selected the books for students. This enabled the teachers to provide reading materials that were appropriately matched to the students' reading levels. The teachers also used Partner Reading as a means of informal assessment. This was especially the case when new students entered the inclusion class at different points throughout the year. During my classroom visits I often observed either Marie or Tirzah participating in Partner Reading with a new student.

Reader Response. As part of Partner Reading, Marie also introduced a Reader Response activity where students completed a 'reader response log' after they had finished reading a selection. The reader response log required students to complete a teacher-made activity sheet that contained four questions about the story they had read. The questions involved: (1) the title and author of the story, (2) what the story was about, (3) what part of the story they liked best, and (4) what part of the story they liked least. A space was also provided for students to draw an illustration depicting the story they read. This activity was first modeled for students during rotation groups where Marie worked closely with students as she modeled for them how to go back and find certain places in the story. The reader response activity provided a visible scaffold for students as they learned to engage with the text in meaningful ways. The 'reader response

log' cued students to use the language tools (i.e., What do I think this story is about?) associated with mature readers. In this way, students were being apprenticed in higher order skills associated with reading comprehension.

   Partner Spelling. Another partner activity that was introduced during rotation groups was Partner Spelling. Tirzah had already taken the lead on spelling instruction, where she introduced students to their new spelling words at the beginning of the week and explained to students what activities they were to complete in their spelling books by the end of the week. She also developed computer activities related to the weekly spelling words. During designated times throughout the week, students had the opportunity to work independently at one of the computers to practice their spelling words. Although Tirzah had initially designed spelling work as independent activity, Marie suggested to Tirzah that they add the collaborative component that paired students who were working on the same units for weekly practice drills of their assigned spelling. Because so many of the third grade special education students were working on the same spelling units as their second grade general education peers, the pairs typically consisted of one special education student and one general education student.

   Partner Spelling occurred on Fridays, just before the students took their weekly spelling test. For partner spelling, each pair of students shared a spelling book and a large, lined chalkboard accompanied by an over-sized sock for erasing. The activity began with one partner dictating the words one at a time

while the other partner wrote them on the chalkboard. After each word, the partner who dictated checked the spelling for accuracy. This continued until one partner had completed the list, and then the partners switched roles. The students spent approximately 15-20 minutes in this weekly activity. Spelling activity at the computer also became a collaborative task at the beginning of October. During the "seatwork" rotation, students often worked in pairs at the computer as they practiced their spelling words together. While Partner Spelling had initially been designed to help students prepare themselves for the weekly spelling test, the collaborative component eventually proved to be an important mechanism for supporting students as they learned to help each other monitor their own performance.

Morning News. During the first half of the school year, Marie usually led the Morning News activity in Tirzah's side of the classroom with half of the students (SE and GE), while the other half typically worked on unfinished assignments at their desks. In Morning News, an individual student dictated a personal experience story for publication in the classroom. As the student (author) dictated a story, Marie acted as the scribe by recording the student's ideas on large chart paper, and as a coach by modeling, guiding, and prompting literacy strategies in the composition and comprehension of text. A prominent feature of the Morning News activity involved the active participation of the student author's peers in the composition and comprehension process. Students, as well as Marie interacted with the author to ask questions that

elicited information from the author to shape and edit the language and content of the story

Also introduced within the context of morning news was **Choral Reading**, where Marie led the students in reading aloud portions of the story together, providing an opportunity for students to practice fluency in a supported condition. When I observed Marie lead the Morning News activity on September 28 (Raeanne's Birthday Story), Tirzah was also present in the room, watching Marie lead Morning News, and monitoring individual students as they worked at their desks. Generally, the Morning News activity was implemeted 2-3 times per week as the first activity of the morning, and early in the school year the class members rotated so all students could participate. By January however, Tirzah had also assumed joint responsibility for Morning News, and she and Marie took turns leading this activity.

Thematic units. Social studies and science provided the context for the initial implementation of thematic units. The first thematic unit on "Families" began as part of the social studies content involving "The Communities We Live In". In the inclusion classroom, social studies and science instruction was scheduled during the afternoon, however the content of the social studies and science curriculum also provided a context for students' reading and writing activity that spanned the entire school day.

The first thematic unit, "Families", generally involved teacher-led discussion, student interviews of their families, and student-generated stories.

However, the next unit, "Native Americans" involved a more comprehensive approach. For this unit, a variety of reading materials about Native Americans and teacher-led discussions provided a context for student inquiry. During the Native American Unit, the teachers and students drew on personal information and information presented in several expository texts that they read as a class, and engaged in the following literacy activities: (a) large group teacher-led discussion, (b) large and small group reading and writing activities where students were introduced to cognitive mapping strategies, (c) the development of individual student 'learning logs' where students documented factual information gathered from expository texts, (d) the development of student word banks for recording new vocabulary, (e) report writing and peer editing, and (f) final draft publication where students' expository reports were made into class books. Approximately every four to six weeks another theme was introduced (e.g., Thanksgiving, Black History, Fossils, Endangered Animals).

Journal Writing. Journal writing typically took place three times per week. The teachers had purchased a spiral notebook for each student in the class and the notebooks were kept in a stack on Tirzah's desk. Initially, a timer was set for approximately 15 minutes, and students were encouraged to write in their journals about various topics that the teachers usually suggested (e.g., favorite thing to do after school).

During journal time, students were instructed that they were to only write during this time. Students were not allowed to draw pictures or talk with their

"friends" unless they needed to ask a friend to help them spell a word. Correct

spelling however, was not necessarily emphasized by the teachers. During my

first observations of journal writing, I often heard Marie remind the students to

not worry if they didn't know how to spell a word. Marie also suggested to

students that if they didn't know how to spell a word, they could either draw a

picture for the word, or just put down the letters they did know (e.g., invented

spelling). Frequently however, the teachers would help with spelling if students

persisted. Students were continually reminded though, that the important thing

was to get their ideas down on paper. Both Marie and Tirzah circulated the

classroom during journal time, checking to see that students were on task and

helping students generate ideas for topics if they demonstrated difficulty doing

this on their own.

Tirzah explained that by mid-October, they no longer used the timer for

journal writing. In late-October I also observed that the students had choices for

journal writing. For example, they could choose to do a "Free Write" on any topic

of their choosing, or they could work on their thematic reports. In fact during one

of my visits on October 26, Lionel (a SE student) asked Tirzah, "Can we do our

own Morning News [in our journal]?" Tirzah replied to Lionel with an enthusiastic

"yes!" It is interesting to note that on a subsequent visit I observed Tirzah

reminding the students as they wrote in their journals, "Think like we do in

Morning News". In this way, Lionel's earlier question prompted Tirzah to provide

a cue for students to help them begin to generalize what they were learning in

the supported conditions of Morning News (e.g., editing conventions, questioning) to their independent writing during journal time.

During one of my visits on November 8, I observed Jack, (a SE student) re-read his journal entry to himself three times, checking his text for clarity and stopping to erase and edit along the way. I observed another special education student, Mark, engaged in the same sort of self-monitoring, softly voicing each word to himself as he worked to bring meaning to his writing. These observations were in sharp contrast to what I have observed in countless classrooms where special education students have demonstrated extreme resistence to writing. As I shared my delight with the teachers, Tirzah explained that she and Marie often had to interrupt journal time so they could move on to something else. In Tirzah's words, "they'd just keep writing if we let them."

Sharing Chair. In order to provide opportunities for students to publicize and share their written journals and other texts with their classmates, sharing chair was implemented approximately 3 times per week in the inclusion classroom. A special chair, designated as "Author's Chair" was first placed in Marie's side of the classroom. In the beginning, like Morning News, Marie led this activity with approximately half the students while other students worked at their desks. Central to the initial implementation of this activity were the questions and comments that Marie modeled for students after they read their stories. For example, after reading their stories, student authors were encouraged to ask their classmates, "Are there any questions or comments?"

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Initially, Marie modeled a lot of her own questions and comments, such as, "I have a question about..., or I like the way you said...." While Marie initially took the lead on modeling this activity, by mid-October Tirzah had also begun to lead the Sharing Chair activity. The teachers explained to me that in order for every student to have an opportunity to share, they had to have two groups going at the same time. Thus, Tirzah also designated a place for Sharing Chair in her portion of the classroom.

With the implementation of Thematic Units, Writing Center was also initiated. In Writing Center, Marie introduced students to expository writing strategies. This was based on a process approach where Marie began her instruction by modeling the writing process for students by incorporating writing strategies such as brainstorming and planning, organizing and mapping, drafting, editing, and revising. Students were initially provided "think sheets" as tools for guiding their writing. The think sheets contained graphic organizers that functioned as visual prompts for students as they carried out the various stages of the writing process.

Marie first modeled the writing strategies as students worked together with her to write a group composition. Several of these early writing lessons involved an expository genre around thematic units (e.g., writing reports about Native Americans) where students worked with Marie in a small group to compose a group-written report. Other writing lessons involved an explanation text structure that Marie referred to as a "How to..." paper" (i.e., How to Play Basketball). As students became more independent in their writing, Writing Center activity

became more tailored in order to work with individual students and writing partners. During this time, Marie guided students in partner and self-editing processes.

While Marie took the initial steps to implement Writing Center, by the end of the school year Tirzah had also begun to work with students in process writing. Tirzah moved from a more traditional skills approach (e.g., word games), to using small group time to work with students on more authentic writing activity. In the spring, Tirzah had developed a thematic unit on "Animals". As part of this unit, students read various texts to gather information for their reports. Tirzah incorporated the idea of a "flip book" to help students record important facts about the animals they were studying and reading about. She used her rotation station as a place to work with small groups of students on their report writing. Tirzah paired students during this small group time and worked with individual pairs of students, modeling the editing process as students shared their writing with each other..

Figure 8 provides a representative sample of the instructional schedule for the inclusion class. The planning schedule indicates how the various components of the Early Literacy curriculum were implemented across the school week.

Summary

The beginning stages of co-teaching first involved the teachers' clarification of what they each hoped to accomplish through co-teaching, and

MORNING SCHEDULE	AFTERNOON SCHEDULE
Monday 9:00 - 9:45 Think Tank 9:45-10:00 Restroom Break 10:00-10:40 Introduce New Spelling 10:40-11:10 Library 11:10-11:30 *Journal Writing* 11:30-12:00 *Sharing Chair*	
Tuesday 9:00 - 9:45 *Morning News* 9:45-10:00 Restroom Break 10:00-10:30 Spelling / Cursive Writing 10:30-12:00 Rotations (small groups)	

Wednesday
 	
9:00 - 9:45 *Morning News*
9:45-10:00 Restroom Break
10:00-10:30 Spelling / Cursive Writing
10:30-12:00 Rotations (small groups)
	Monday through Friday
	
	12:45 - 1:00 DEAR / *Partner Reading*
	1:00 - 2:00 Math
	2:00 - 2:30 "Specials"
	     (Music, Gym, Library)
	2:30 - 3:15 Social Studies / Science
	     (Thematic Units)

Thursday 9:00 - 9:45 *Morning News* 9:45-10:00 Restroom Break 10:00-10:40 Spelling / Cursive Writing 10:40-11:10 *Partner Reading* 11:10-11:30 *Journal Writing* 11:30-12:00 *Sharing Chair*	
Friday 9:00 - 9:30 *Partner Reading* 9:30-10:00 *Journal Writing* 10:00-10:45 Think Tank 10:45-11:30 Gym 11:30-11:45 *Partner Spelling* 11:45-12:00 Weekly Spelling test	

Figure 8. The instructional schedule for the inclusion classroom (ELP curriculum components in boldface type).

their mutual recognition that they each would contribute to the process of inclusion and co-teaching in meaningful ways. As the process of inclusion began to unfold, it was also clear that the merger of Marie and Tirzah's classrooms required both the teachers and students to negotiate new roles in the classroom. This negotiation not only involved the teachers' realignment with new instructional roles, it also required special education students to re-define their participatory role in the general education classroom.

Marie and Tirzah's initial implementation of a station teaching model allowed both teachers the opportunity to establish an instructional relationship with each and every student in the inclusion class. Further, the early implementation of several ELP activities, where special education and general education students worked collaboratively to accomplish literacy goals provided special eduction students opportunities where they could begin to shed their special education labels, and re-identify themselves as collaborative participants in a learning community.

Similarly, as Marie and Tirzah participated together in the process of inclusion, they demonstrated the value of *teachers'* collaborative activity in a learning community. Inclusion and co-teaching provided a meaningful and supported context for Tirzah as she pushed herself to experiment with new teaching practices. Although Marie had initially assumed primary responsibility for putting into place the central components of the ELP curriculum, she recognized that in order for Tirzah to begin to take ownership in the curriculum, she would need support at places along the way as she tried out the activities

herself. Over time, Marie gradually ceded control of the curriculum to Tirzah, yet Marie's constant presence in the classroom provided Tirzah with the added benefit of a coach, providing support and immediate feedback asTirzah persisted to refine her teaching.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE TEACHING
ON STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN A LITERACY COMMUNITY

Chapter Introduction

This chapter addresses the last set of research questions that sought to examine the nature of students' participation in the inclusion process. The chapter describes how the ELP curricular approach provided a framework for the co-teachers to create a learning community that was inclusive of all students. The teachers' enactment of literacy principles encompassed all areas of the literacy curriculum in the inclusion classroom to foster students' participation in the literacy community in multiple ways. As such, special education and general education students, along with their co-teachers, worked collaboratively to accomplish literacy goals.

The descriptive analysis provided in this chapter is framed by four categories of teaching behavior that cut across several areas of the literacy curriculum in the inclusion classroom. The teaching behaviors were found to be critical factors in supporting special education students as they learned to negotiate the demands of the general education classroom, and more importantly, as they discovered their participatory roles as readers and writers in a literacy community.

Supported Inclusion: Features of Inclusive Teaching

During my fall observations of the inclusion class, my primary focus was on the implementation of the ELP activities and how the literacy curriculum began to take shape in that setting. At that time, I was particularly interested in capturing how the co-teachers organized the literacy curriculum in order to accommodate the diverse group of students, as well as how Marie supported Tirzah's learning as she collaborated with Marie in the implementation of the ELP curriculum.

In January, while I continued to observe the process of co-teaching and the collaborative implementation of the ELP curriculum in Marie and Tirzah's classroom, my observations encompassed questions about how the students in the class participated in this process. I was particularly interested in how special education students' participation compared to that of the general education students. I was also interested in whether or not there were differences between the participation levels of former ELP students and special education students who entered the class at later points in the school year. Central to these questions was the nature of students' literacy performance and how special education students demonstrated their capabilities as readers and writers in the inclusion setting.

During my time in the inclusion classroom, as I continued to focus on the co-teachers' enactment of the ELP principles, I began to observe some interesting patterns in relation to the students' participation in this process. As I

worked to bring meaning to the data I was collecting, my attention was drawn to

certain teaching behaviors that cut across the entire curriculum..

The next section of the chapter is organized around the four categories of

teaching behavior that emerged as the result of the analysis of the entire corpus

of data. These categories are referred to throughout the remaining chapters as

features of inclusive teaching. As such, these categories may point to critical

conditions necessary to support students with mild disabilities in inclusion

classrooms. Figure 9 provides information that describes and exemplifies the

four features of inclusive teaching that were observed in the inclusion classroom.

Helping Students Build 'Community'

As discussed in Chapter Four, the co-teaching arrangement between

Marie and Tirzah initially presented a challenge for many special education

students in the class who were resistant to taking on new roles within the context

of the general education setting. This was not surprising, as the majority of the

special education students had spent most of their school years in segregated

programs, having few opportunities to connect with the general education

curriculum and their general education peers. Marie and Tirzah recognized this

dilemma early on, and expressed their mutual desire to change the special

education students' beliefs about their roles as learners in the general education

classroom. More importantly, both teachers demonstrated the understanding

that inclusion meant far more than merely placing a special education student in

a general education classroom. In Marie and Tirzah's inclusion classroom, the

Helping Students Build 'Community'

◆Fostering community awareness by creating participation structures that emphasize collaborative activity and joint problem-solving
◆Modeling the 'language' of cooperation. (Friends Help Friends, We All Work Together)
◆Extending community-building efforts to all areas of classroom activity, finding places where students can assist each other.
◆Reinforcing the notion that all ideas in the community are respected and valued.
◆Providing visible cues throughout the classroom that encourage collaboration and cooperation. (Posters highlighting a 'Cooperative' work ethic; seating arrangements)
◆Strategic planning for the arrival of new students to the classroom (Assigning a friend to each new student to provide support, guidance, and leadership as the new student makes the transition)
◆Modeling collaboration, making teachers' collaborative-planning activity visible to students when appropriate.

Helping Students to Find Their Personal Points of Entry into the Literacy Discourse of the Classroom

◆Finding an entry point for every student to meaningfully connect with literacy.
◆Respecting students' ideas and risk-taking attempts in literacy acts.
◆Letting the literacy curriculum and instruction unfold around what students already know.
◆Providing visible literacy scaffolds throughout the classroom.
◆Embedding reading and writing strategies across the entire literacy curriculum.

Helping Students Maintain High Levels of Engagement in Literacy Acts

◆Creating participation structures that foster inquiry-related activity.
◆Using flexible and dynamic grouping practices (Station-teaching, whole group co-teaching, small group parallel teaching, partnering, individual).
◆Moving responsively in students' zones of proximal development.

Helping Students to Empower Themselves as Readers and Writers

◆Apprenticing students in the 'language' tools of mature readers and writers (Cognitive strategies and visible scaffolds, teacher and student think-alouds).
◆Providing students time to process and problem-solve.
◆Ceding control of the literacy dialogue to students.
◆Creating literacy choices in the classroom.
◆Publicizing and celebrating literacy achievements.

Figure 9. Four features of inclusive teaching.

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teachers facilitated the inclusion process by fostering a supportive atmosphere where students would feel safe as they learned to take risks in the literacy community, and where special education students could begin to negotiate new roles for themselves as readers, writers, and collaborative participants in a learning community. As such, one feature of inclusive teaching observed in this setting, involved how the co-teachers modeled 'community' for students.

Community-building in Tirzah and Marie's classroom began with the teachers' modeling of a cooperative work ethic, and helping students to understand that learning was a social enterprise, whereby all students, including those students with learning challenges could make valuable contributions to the collective knowledge of the learning community. During my classroom visits, I observed the teachers model 'community' for students in several ways.

First, the co-teachers fostered community awareness by creating participation structures that emphasized collaborative activity and joint-problem solving as a legitimate means for achieving literacy goals. In activities such as Morning News, Sharing Chair, and Writing Center for example, the co-teachers modeled community by actively engaging students in a classroom dialogue that was characterized by questions and comments designed to help students help each other as readers and writers. Relatedly, the co-teachers' consistent reference to the students as 'friends', sent the message to students that their classroom was a place where there was always someone available to help, and where it was safe to ask questions. In fact, in situations where students failed to show respect for another student's ideas or questions (e.g., laughing at

someone's comment during Morning News), Marie and Tirzah did not hesitate to interrupt the conversation in order to discuss community values and the importance of supporting one another. In this manner, the teachers demonstrated their community-building efforts across all classroom activities, turning students to each other for community support, and reinforcing the notion that all ideas in the community were valued and respected.

Another way that the co-teachers modeled 'community' for students, was by providing visible cues throughout the classroom. An example of this was the various posters that displayed the language of cooperation (e.g., "We All Work Together", "Friends Help Friends"). Another example involved the physical arrangement of students' desks. Although Marie and Tirzah's combined classrooms provided ample space for distributing students' desks across the entire space of two adjoined classrooms, all the desks were placed on Tirzah's side of the room, where a combination of special education and general education students were grouped in clusters of four. In fact, when new special education students entered the inclusion class at later points in the school year, even though space became a legitimate concern, Tirzah insisted that all the students' desks needed to be together in the general education classroom. Tirzah often expressed her concerns about the negative effects of labeling special education students, and feared that separating students' desks would further contribute to students' confusion about their participatory role in the classroom (conversation, 2/9/94).

Finally, the co-teachers were very strategic as they planned for the arrival

of new students who entered the class at later points in the school year. Prior to

a new student's arrival, Marie and Tirzah assigned a 'friend' to each new student

in order to provide support and guidance as the new student learned to negotiate

the ways of the classroom. Relatedly, as the co-teachers publicly engaged in

other kinds of day-to-day, and sometimes, moment-to-moment planning

conversations in the classroom, it provided an opportunity for students to

observe the *teachers'* collaborative participation in the community, thus

reinforcing for students the notion that problem-solving is often the result of

collective and cooperative effort.

Helping Students Find Their Personal Points of Entry into the Literacy Discourse of the Classroom

Community-building took on another dimension in the inclusion setting as

Marie and Tirzah worked to create opportunities for every student to

meaningfully connect with literacy in the classroom. Therefore, another way that

the co-teachers in this study demonstrated inclusive teaching involved the ways

in which they facilitated students' access to literacy by *helping students find their*

personal points of entry into the literacy discourse of the classroom. In this way,

Marie and Tirzah persisted to find ways to meet students in their zones of

proximal development, rather than expecting students to conform to curriculum

goals.

The instructional grouping of students in the inclusion classroom put Marie and Tirzah in close proximity to students, enabling the teachers to more closely assess where individual students might begin to enter a literacy discourse. For many students, their personal narratives (Morning News, Journals) became the point of entry for them, and the place where an instructional dialogue began. Rather than expecting the students to conform to a rigid set of curriculum standards, curriculum goals and the teachers' instruction unfolded around what students already knew and their experiences. Thus, students' own personal texts produced in Morning News and Journal Writing is where Marie and Tirzah situated their literacy instruction and engaged students in meaningful dialogues about the writing process.

The teachers also used the Morning News activity as a way to help new special education students begin to see their participatory role in the problem-solving processes of literacy learning. For example, Marie and Tirzah strategically 'pulled' reluctant students into the problem-solving dialogue of Morning News by asking for instance, "Ellen, where would we need to put a capital letter?", or "Miguel, it looks like you have a question for John." I observed several occasions where a student's response was not appropriate at the time, yet the teachers asked the student to "hold onto that idea", and then persisted to find a way to weave the student's idea back into the discussion at a later point. The teachers worked hard to transform students' "incorrect" answers into "correct" answers by searching for links and connections to what students already knew. In this way, the co-teachers engendered respect for students'

ideas and risk-taking attempts, and helped all students begin to find their 'voices' as authors, readers, respondents, and informants in the literacy community.

Helping Students Maintain High Levels of Engagement in Literacy Acts

A third feature of inclusive teaching observed in the inclusion classroom involved how the co-teachers helped students maintain high levels of engagement with literacy acts. Marie and Tirzah accomplished this in several ways. First, *the creation of participation structures that fostered inquiry-related activity* (i.e., Morning News, Sharing Chair, Thematic Units) provided a context where all students, regardless of their basic skill level, could actively engage in the problem-solving processes and dialogue of higher-order literacy. In Morning News for example, the teachers encouraged students to ask questions and make conjectures that might guide the development of the group story. Even students who had a history of inattentive behavior in the classroom demonstrated high levels of engagement in Morning News. Pam, for example, a special education student with attention-deficit/hyper-activity disorder was a student who consistently contributed her ideas and asked questions during Morning News, often leading her peers in the higher-order task of trying to bring meaning to text.

Second, by incorporating *flexible and dynamic grouping practices* in the classroom, (i.e., station-teaching, whole group co-teaching, parallel teaching, partners) Marie and Tirzah were able to maximize students' engagement with

literacy. For example, the station-teaching model that the co-teachers implemented allowed the teachers to individualize instruction based on students' needs. The following example of the instructional organization of Writing Center illustrates how the teachers remained instructionally responsive to students' individual needs, without compromising the integrity of the writing process.

In Writing Center, all the students in the classroom were introduced to expository writing processes by Marie; however, the station teaching model allowed her to individualize the writing instruction in ways that were responsive to the needs of the students in that particular group. In Writing Center, all students were involved in the multiple stages of the writing process (i.e., brainstorming, organizing, composing a draft, editing, revising), however, the teacher's instruction involved varying levels of support depending on students' needs. For one group of students for example, Marie led the group through the various stages of writing, modeling the entire writing process and organizational strategies on large chart paper. Marie and the students worked together to compose a group report.

Another group of students, however, required less support. They worked at the Writing Center on individual reports where they had selected their own topics. This group worked on their own to map their ideas using the "think sheets" that were provided, and in subsequent sessions the composed their own drafts. For this group of students, Marie provided guidance by helping students monitor their individual performance. Marie, for example, often reminded

students to "refer to your map for ideas", or asked students, "Did you remember to use key words?"

A third group of students who was even further along in the writing process, used the Writing Center as a place to work with a partner in peer editing. For this group, Marie often guided students' performance in the peer editing process by modeling the questions and comments that characterize a writing conference between author and respondent. The students were also supported in the peer-editing process by a set of 'think sheets' that served as visible tools to guide the students' questioning during the editing conference. The co-teachers' use of flexible grouping arrangements in the inclusion classroom enabled the teachers to keep all students engaged with reading and writing activity at high levels because instruction was modified in ways that were responsive to students' emergent instructional needs.

Finally, the co-teachers helped students in the inclusion classroom maintain high levels of engagement with literacy *by providing reading materials that were accessible to students*. Marie and Tirzah provided a wide range of reading materials that spanned the various reading levels and encompassed the diverse interests and experiences of the students in the classroom (i.e., high interest/emergent skills, poems and patterned texts, predictable books). In this way, students were able to meaningfully enage with the act of reading because they were provided with materials that allowed them to experience immediate success as readers.

Helping Students Empower Themselves as Readers and Writers

'Supported learning' is the term that best characterizes the literacy activity I observed in the inclusion classroom. The process of supported learning began with the co-teachers' commitment to building a learning community where all students would recognize the value of collaborative activity, and where all students, regardless of their skill levels in reading and writing, could meaningfully participate in the literacy discourse of the classroom.

In Marie and Tirzah's classroom, supported learning also meant that the teachers facilitated students' access to literacy by providing varying levels of support for students across all areas of the literacy curriculum in order to *promote students' ownership of literacy and to help students empower themselves as readers and writers.* The teachers accomplished this by scaffolding students' performance across all reading and writing activity, by providing students time to negotiate and problem-solve during collaborative activity, and by turning control of the literacy dialogue over to students as students came to internalize reading and writing processes.

First, the co-teachers *provided a variety of visual prompts and organizers* to equip students with the tools to help them generate, organize, and carry out literacy problem-solving. In Morning News for example, Marie and Tirzah provided several scaffolds for students such as having students generate a list of 'helper words' (e.g., who, what, when, how...) to guide students' production and comprehension of text during the group writing process. The teachers also used

color-coding during the Morning News editing to provide visual cues for students as the teachers modeled editing processes and conventions.

Marie and Tirzah also *scaffolded students' performance in reading and writing by teaching strategies* to students such a character mapping, and other cognitive mapping strategies to help students organize expository reading and writing processes. Strategy instruction in the inclusion classroom was not an isolated event, but rather, strategies were embedded across the entire curriculum, including social studies and science where the teachers taught students how to using cognitive mapping strategies in order to accomplish reading and writing goals in the context of thematic units.

In addition to teaching students cognitive mapping strategies, Marie and Tirzah also supported students' independent writing by encouraging students to use forms of invented spelling during composing. In this way, students' weaknesses in basic skills such as spelling did not interfere with students' generation of ideas. The introduction of "word banks" was another way that the teachers encouraged students in the writing process. Each student in the class kept an individual word bank that the student could continually add to as new words were encountered. This provided another source from which students could draw during independent writing.

Many of the instructional scaffolds that the teachers created for students were also left visible in the classroom and provided continuous support as students elected to use them. For example, the 'helper words' (who, what, when, where, how, why) from Morning News were made into a large mobile that

hung from the ceiling. Similarly, the 'key words' strategy that students learned in the context of expository writing (e.g., first, second, then, next, and so forth) were posted in the classroom so students could draw on them during independent writing. The poems that students chorally read, along with the Morning News stories that the students had composed were also left up as future resources for students.

Another way that the co-teachers helped to empower students as readers and writers is by *apprenticing students in the 'language' of literacy problem-solving.* During instruction, Marie and Tirzah scaffolded students' performance by making their own thinking "visible" to students. Throughout the literacy curriculum, teacher think-alouds helped students begin to internalize the inner talk that guides the reading and writing process. In Morning News for example, the teachers modeled the questions that mature writers ask themselves (e.g., "I'm wondering if this paragraph makes sense"; "Where should I use a key word?"). Similarly, the teachers worked on comprehension goals by guiding students in the "talk" of good readers. For example, during reading, the teachers made comprehension processes visible to students by thinking aloud guiding statements such as, "I already know this about the topic...", "I think the main idea is...", "I predict that the next thing will be about...", or, "I'm confused about what this word means...." Figure 10 provides a list of the multiple supports and instructional scaffolds that helped students in the inclusion classroom meaningfully connect with literacy and empower themselves as readers and writers.

- ◆ Helper Words (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How...)

- ◆ Key Words (First, Second, Third,... Next, Last, Finally)

- ◆ Word Banks that Students Continually Add To

- ◆ Class Books Written by Students

- ◆ Poems and Morning News Stories Left Posted on the Walls

- ◆ Color-Coding Editing in Morning News

- ◆ Cognitive Maps to Organize Reading & Writing Processes

- ◆ Reader Response Logs

- ◆ Partner Reading/Partner Writing/Partner Spelling

- ◆ Flexible Grouping (large group, small group, pairs, individual)

- ◆ Teacher Think-Alouds/Student Think-Alouds

- ◆ Invented Spelling

- ◆ Participation Structures that Encourage Inquiry-related Activity and Student/Student Talk

- ◆ Flexible Use of Classroom Space

- ◆ Embedding Strategy Instruction Across the Curriculum

- ◆ Creating Conditions Where Students Can Assist Each Other

- ◆ Using Students' Personal Narratives as a Place to Situate Literacy Instruction

- ◆ Providing a Range of Authentic and Meaningful Reading Materials (high interest/emergent skills, books on tape)

- ◆ Providing opportunties for immediate success (Choral reading, poems, patterned, predictable texts)

- ◆ Apprenticing Students in the Language Tools of Mature Readers and Writers

Figure 10. Supports scaffolds provided for students in the inclusion classroom.

In summary, the inclusive nature of the teaching practices observed in this inclusion setting created an instructional context where even students with limited basic skills began to take risks as readers and writers. The features of inclusive teaching observed in this classroom provided all students with opportunities to meaningfully connect with the literacy curriculum, to contribute their ideas as valued members of the literacy community, and to demonstrate their capabilities as readers and writers. The next sections illustrate how the four features of inclusive teaching observed in this inclusion classroom influenced students' participation in the literacy community. The stories of several special education students illustrate how the students came to re-define their roles as learners and take ownership of their learning in a classroom that emphasized the social and strategic tools of literacy.

Inclusive Teaching and Its Impact on Student Participation in a Literacy Community

Taking Ownership as Readers and Writers

Many students demonstrating a history of school failure in learning to read and write have often been afforded few opportunities to access literacy in the classroom in meaningful and supported ways. Limited materials, content that often shows little relevance to students' lives, and instruction that fails to provide students with the appropriate tools to accomplish literacy goals create barriers for students, particularly students who struggle with even basic reading and writing skills. Moreover, teachers' expectations that fall short of what students

can accomplish as readers and writers if given the appropriate cognitive tools, further compromise students' access to literacy. The following story of Nicole illustrates how special education students, if given the appropriate tools, can demonstrate their capabilities as writers.

Nicole *Can* Write

Nicole's brief, yet positive encounter with Marie and Tirzah's classroom illustrates the power of teachers' expectations, as well as their persistence to help students empower themselves as writers. Nicole was a third grade student with learning disabilities. She began the school year in Marie and Tirzah's class, however, after the first semester her family moved and this resulted in Nicole's transfer to another school. Although Nicole only spent a few months in the inclusion classroom, she demonstrated significant growth as a writer. In order to understand the significance of Nicole's experience in Marie and Tirzah's classroom however, it's important to have some background information about Nicole's former special education placement.

A year prior to this study, I had the opportunity to observe a special education classroom in another school. I was collecting data for the Early Literacy Project in a special education classroom that served as one of the control sites. During one of my visits, I asked the teacher if I could see some of Nicole's writing. Without hesitation, and in no uncertain terms, the teacher explained to me that Nicole couldn't write. She explained that during writing time in the classroom, Nicole usually sat and drew pictures in her journal. It was not

surprising to find out later that the special education teacher in this classroom did not teach writing strategies, nor did she engage students in writing beyond a bi-weekly journal activity.
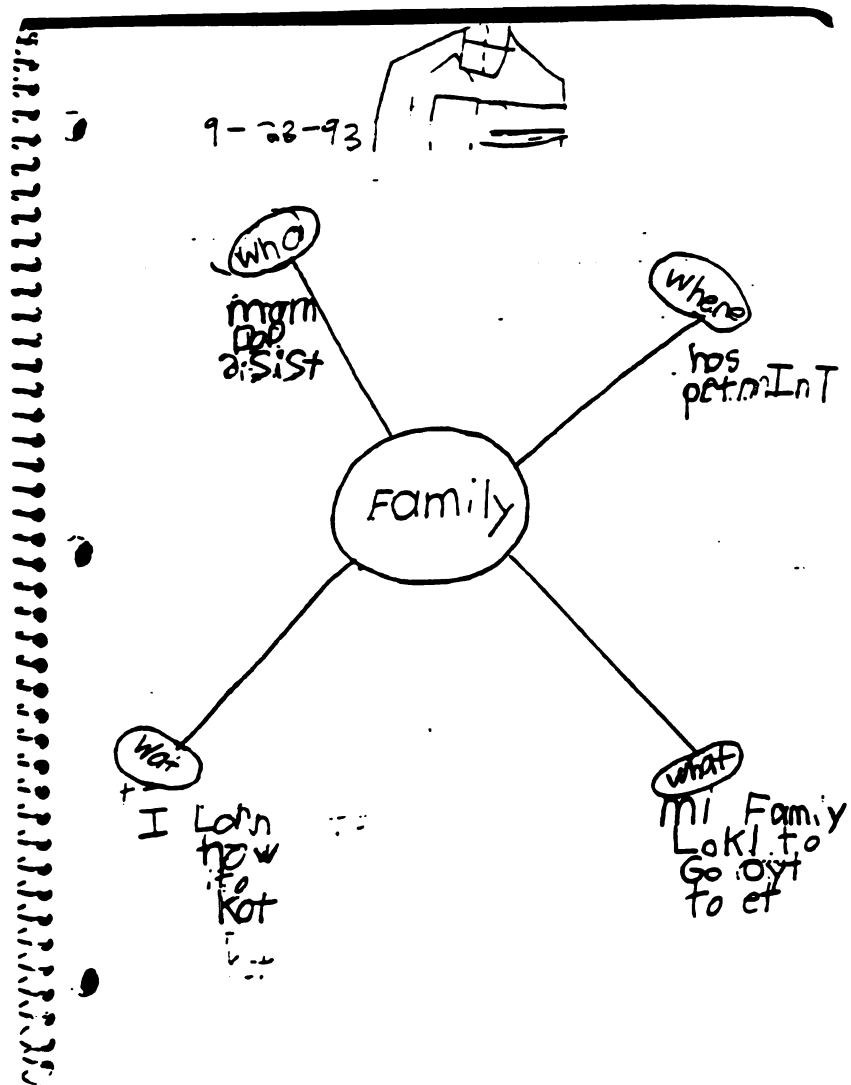
The following year, on my first day of data collection at Avon School, I was pleased to see Nicole sitting in Marie and Tirzah's classroom. Marie explained to me that Nicole had just transferred to the school. During the next several weeks, I kept a close eye on Nicole, curious about how she might perform in this setting, since she was presumed by her former teacher to be a *non-writer.*

Nicole's first attempts at writing were limited. On September 7, Nicole wrote a short entry in her journal entitled, "Friends". Figure 11 shows Nicole's journal entry. Clearly, Nicole's writing illustrates appropriate sentence structure and a general knowledge of sound-symbol relationships, however, Nicole appeared to have difficulty generating ideas for her writing.

In September, the students in Marie and Tirzah's classroom had begun their thematic unit on 'Communities'. An initial activity involved the students in writing about their own families. By this time, the students in the class had been introduced to cognitive mapping strategies as tools to plan and organize their writing. When I observed the class on September 23, it was interesting to see how Nicole had 'grabbed' the mapping strategy and used it as a support for her own journal writing. Figure 12 shows Nicole's September 23 journal entry. This example shows how key words (helper words) such as *who, where*, and *what* cued Nicole to ask self-questions that would help her to generate more ideas for her text. Further, the mapping strategy provided Nicole with the necessary visual

Friends   9-7-93
I Like to poe wit mi Friends
at the poK.
I Like to Rid mi bik

Figure 11. Nicole's September 7 journal entry.

9-23-93

who
mam
Dad
siSist

where
hos
pet.minT

Family

Wat
I Lorn
how
to
Kot

what
mi Famiy
Lokl to
Go oyt
to et

Nicole's September 23 journal entry.

prompts to help her begin to organize her ideas into categories. This is in sharp contrast to Nicole's earlier journal entry (Figure 11) that showed little evidence of her use of writing strategies.

By early December, Nicole was well on her way as a writer. While her first journal entry just three months prior may have suggested to some teachers that Nicole was a non-writer, the report that Nicole wrote during the first week of December showed marked improvement. Figure 13 shows Nicole's written report on "Indians". This example of Nicole's writing shows growth in several ways. First, in contrast to her September 7 journal entry where she generated a total of 17 words, in her December report, Nicole generated a total of 196 words. Second, Nicole's report included an introductory sentence indicating to the reader what the report was going to be about, providing an overview of how the report would be organized around several categories (e.g., where Indians live, how they get their food, what kinds of houses they live in, what Indians make). Third, Nicole used key words (e.g., first, second, third, last) to indicate transitions from one category to the next.

Nicole's report also shows evidence that she monitored her comprehension and production of text. She accurately followed the sequence that she indicated in her introduction, and included only relevant information under each category that she discussed. At one place, Nicole also used of a 'caret' to insert words into her text, indicating her attempt to bring sense and meaning to what she had written. Thus, there is evidence that by early December Nicole had begun to internalize some of the writing conventions that

Indians

I am going to tell yow — 2-2-93 — December 2,1993
a bot Indians. First I am
going to tell you abodt
where they live, How they
get food, Types of hooses
and what They mode.
First I am going to tell you
aboot where they live.
They live in us,
They live in eastern woodands
They live In The For north
They live In northwest coast
and They live In puetls.
second I am going to tell you about
how They get food. They
hunted. deer and beer.
                           They farme
and They grow com beans
and They grow squash and They
grow rice and They gattering
ber. frot

Figure 13. Nicole's written report on Native Americans.

Third I am going to tell you
about The Types of houses
They live in a Long houses
and They live in a wigwarn
and They live in a Tepee
and They live In poma bot
Last I am going to tell you
about what they made.
they made craleboard for
Ther babez. they made canoe:
to pout in the wodrw.
and Ther made toboggan
they made toboggan it of wood
they made neck lace ot of.
ston and bone and shell beads
they made basket they made
basket ot of birch bark.

had been embedded within the context of Morning News (re-reading,editing, revising), and had begun to borrow from many of the literacy artifacts and scaffolds provided throughout the classroom (e.g., writing maps, helper words, word banks). What Nicole's story suggests is that students can demonstrate their capabilities in writing if they are apprenticed in the language tools and the use of cognitive supports that guide the writing process. By introducing Nicole to a mapping strategy and scaffolding Niocole's writing by providing her with the cognitive tools and visible cues to help her generate, plan, and organize her ideas, Nicole was able to access the higher order processes of literacy and begin to empower herself as a writer.

Finding Support in a Literacy Community

The students in Marie and Tirzah's classroom shared in a community spirit that was characterized by a mutual respect for what each member of the class could contribute to the community. Further, as students came to recognize themselves as experts and problem-solvers in collaborative activity, they began to demonstrate greater accountability to the collective literacy goals of the classroom. For many special education students, however, this initially challenged their existing beliefs about their roles as learners in the larger school community. Though in the beginning stages of the inclusion process, many special education students were reluctant to take on new roles in the general education setting, over time many special education students demonstrated greater responsibilty in their own learning, as well as responsibilty for helping

others accomplish reading and writing goals. The following story of Charles indicates how some special education children initially found it more difficult to find their place in a more collaborative learning community. Charles' story, as well as the others that follow were selected because their stories illustrate significant shifts in how they eventually came to view themselves as collaborative participants in a learning community.

Helping Is Cheating, Isn't It?

The story of Charles, an eight year-old student with learning disabilities illustrates how many special education students in the inclusion classroom initially resisted the idea of collaborative activity and 'supported' learning as a legitimate means for demonstrating ones' capabilities in literacy. Charles became a member of the inclusion class in February. Charles had originally been placed in a special education resource room in the same building, however, due to the large numbers of students in that classroom, Charles and three other special education students (Dustin, Ellen, Priscilla) were moved to Marie and Tirzah's class mid-year. It didn't take long to recognize how difficult it was for Charles and the other new students to feel comfortable in a class where students were encouraged to share their ideas publically, read books together on the floor, and work in pairs to write stories. This was not entirely surprising however, given the fact that special education students in more traditional settings have typically been denied access to these kinds of participation structures. The

structure of activity in Marie and Tirzah's classroom was something quite unfamiliar to Charles and many of his special education peers.

On February 9, I observed Charles on his second day in the inclusion classroom. During rotations, I listened as Charles and three other new special education students chorally read a story from a first grade basal reader with Marie. As I listened, I observed a slight hostility between Charles and his classmate, Dustin. Charles, moving his chair farther and farther away from the group, complained that Dustin was sitting "too close", and that he was "looking at [Charles'] book." Marie ignored Charles' behavior at the time, however, after the students had finished reading the story, Marie took a few minutes to talk with the students about their new classroom. Charles and his classmates, appearing quite attentive, kept their eyes directly on Marie as she talked about their new class, emphasizing its cooperative nature and explaining to the students that "we are all friends... in [this class] we help each other with things." The discussion was soon interrupted by the noon bell, and Charles and his classmates shuffled off to their desks to get ready for lunch.

Over the next couple of weeks, I directed more of my attention to the new special education students in the classroom, curious about how they were making the transition from their traditional special education settings to the inclusion classroom. Much of what I observed during that time suggested that the new special education students were having a difficult time acclimating to the collaborative work ethic of this community, and negotiating new roles for themselves as learners in this classroom. Ellen, for instance, seldom interacted

with her peers, yet frequently followed Marie around the classroom, seeking

recognition for every attempt she made to complete her work. Similarly, Dustin

struggled with the idea of a collaborative work ethic in the classroom, and often

became hostile with peers who attempted to assist him, claiming, "you aren't the

teacher!" Priscilla demonstrated perhaps the most visible resistence to

becoming a member of the community, continuously moving her desk into

Marie's side of the classroom away from the rest of her peers. This same

resistence was evidenced by Priscilla's initial dislike for Partner Reading, and

any other activity that required her to work with a 'buddy'.

On Feb 23, I met with Marie and Tirzah after school to talk with them

about the new students. During our meeting, Marie shared with me what she

had observed earlier that morning. Marie explained that while she was working

with a group of students in Writing Center, she scanned the classroom to check

on the students who were working at their desks. When she glanced at where

Charles was sitting, all she could see was a 'fortress' of manila file folders,

stapled together and taped to the desk in an upright position to create a wall

around Charles and his work. Marie explained to me that she quietly walked

over to Charles' desk and questioned him about the folders. Charles explained

to Marie that he had to have the file folders so "Dustin wouldn't cheat off his

paper."

Marie and Tirzah both shared their concerns about the new special

education students and how many of them, in Marie's words, "have never

learned how to work together." Marie also explained that the special education

classroom from where the new students had come was very traditional in the sense that students typically worked on their own, and covering up one's work to prevent someone else from "cheating" was a normal practice among students.

Charles' and the other students' initial resistence to participate in a classroom community that encouraged collaborative activity and student-to-student interaction suggests that these students had come to view school learning as an individual enterprise, and clearly reflected how Charles and other special education students had become so deeply entrenched in the practices of traditional special education programs. Overtime, however, it became evident that these special education students had begun to re-define their roles as learners in the inclusion classroom. During my classroom visits on May 17 and 18, I observed Charles and other special education students trying on their new roles as collaborative participants in a literacy community. Ellen, for example, took the lead in introducing a new student, Raymond, to Partner Reading. I observed Miguel and Lionel during Sharing Chair chorally reading a book report they had written together in preparation for an upcoming school assembly. Priscilla, while still positioning herself in the margins of classroom activity, called out the names of several categories (i.e., what it looks like, where it lives, what it eats) to a student on the other side of the classroom who voiced confusion about how he should start his paper about the panda bear. As I momentarily reflected on the powerful influence of 'community' in this classroom, I also heard Charles say to Marie, "Me and Dustin are going to practice [our spelling words] together, okay?"

During the afternoon of May 18, I observed what I believe to be one of the most significant examples of how special education students in this setting came to empower themselves as learners and problem solvers. It is important to note, too, that on this day, Marie was absent and a substitute teacher had been assigned to take her place.

As I sat that afternoon at the periphery of the classroom watching the students work quietly in their journals, my attention was immediately drawn to Charles, who left his seat several times to walk across the room to look at a large drawing of a tree that had been tacked to the bulletin board near the windows. The tree had been drawn on large chart paper, and from each branch of the tree were vocabulary words having to do with Spring. I paid close attention to Charles, as I watched him shuffle quickly back and forth from the bulletin board to his desk. Each time he stood in front of the picture of the tree, his eyes scanned the branches, appearing as though he was trying to locate certain words. After he located a word with his finger, he quickly returned to his desk and wrote on his paper. Charles proceeded in this manner a few more times, appearing to keep the correct spelling of the words in his head each time he returned to his desk. However, about mid-way through he changed his strategy and took a paper and pencil with him each time he visited the tree. After watching Charles for several minutes from afar, I walked over to the substitute teacher to ask her what the students were working on. She shared with me that she and Tirzah had changed their afternoon plans and decided to have the students write stories about spring in their journals. She explained to me that the

class had brainstormed a list of ideas about spring earlier that morning and she

recorded them on the picture of the tree that she had drawn.

Charles' engagement with this writing activity illustrates a significant shift

in the way he had initially perceived his role as learner in this classroom. When

Charles first transferred to the inclusion classroom, his beliefs about his limited

role in the enterprise of learning were exemplified in the ways he chose to isolate

himself from his classmates. In fact, Charles' initial discomfort with the

collaborative norms of the inclusion classroom prompted him to actually re-

create a set of walls, perhaps in order to maintain the more traditional special

education norms in which he and others had become so deeply entrenched.

The manila fortress that Charles constructed just days after he had

transferred to the inclusion class symbolizes his early resistence to taking on a

new role as learner. Although Marie had Charles remove the manila folders from

his desk a few days after he had put them up, it is still not clear whether or not

the walls entirely disappeared for him. The "tree" example, however, illustrates a

significant shift in Charles' earlier notions about 'cheating' and learning. What

the "tree" example suggests is that Charles had become more comfortable with

the idea that learning is embedded in social practices. Perhaps overtime,

Charles would have recognized for himself that he *needed* the wall down in order

to borrow the cultural artifacts from the environment in order to demonstrate his

capabilities in literacy. Perhaps he would have recognized that he needed the

wall down in order to learn. Nevertheless, as I observed Charles on May 18 as

he worked on his story about spring, it was clear that his notion of "cheating" had

been replaced with the notion of "borrowing words." In this way, perhaps Charles had begun to internalize the idea that literacy learning is a social process. And perhaps as the literacy barriers to which Charles had become accustomed slowly crumbled away, so did the walls with which he initially surrounded himself.

Taking Risks, Taking Responsibility, Taking Pride in Literacy Accomplishments

As special education students in Marie and Tirzah's class assumed greater participatory roles in the literacy community, they began to demonstrate greater responsibility in helping to sustain the shared literacy goals and values of the community, taking more risks, and taking pride in their literacy accomplishments. The following stories illustrate how the four features of inclusive teaching described earlier in this chapter provided students in the inclusion class with the necessary tools to take risks as readers and writers and to assume greater responsibility as participating members of a literacy community.

Excuse Us, But We're Not Finished Yet.

On May 29, I observed one of the morning rotations. I had become particularly interested in a group of 4 students (2 SE and 2 GE) that Tirzah was working with at her station. The students came to Tirzah's table, each having completed their first draft of their expository papers on 'animals". They had spent

several weeks on a thematic unit where they had read books, and collected and documented factual information on the animal of their choice. During this rotation with Tirzah, they each read their report aloud to the rest of the group, and after each student had read, they turned to their peers for "questions and comments", a literacy practice that the students engaged in frequently as part of Morning News and Sharing Chair. It was interesting to note that Tirzah did not appear to control this process, and her participatory role in this activity paralleled that of the students. It was evident that the students in this group took the lead in the dialogue, and assumed equal ownership in the process.

On this particular occasion, what was most striking was the level of intensity with which these students approached the task of peer editing. I had been observing this group of students right from the start of this rotation with Tirzah, and watched students as they patiently and quietly listened to each of their friends read. This could have been especially challenging for Pam (a student identified as having attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), as it was often difficult for her to sit still. What I found to be particularly interesting however, is that even though Pam became quite fidgety in her seat as she listened to her peers read (some of whom read very slowly), she tended to take the lead in questions and comments, frequently making helpful comments to her peers about how they could make their writing more clear. Three times during this session, Pam helped her friend Melissa (a general education student) go back and find places in her paper where she could "fix things".. and make it "sound better." This high level of engagement on Pam's part might have been

expected however, since she also participated at high levels during Morning News (discussed earlier in this chapter).

The most interesting behavior that I observed during this session began just as the timer sounded to indicate to students that they were to rotate to their next stations. When the timer sounded, one of the students, Ethan was still reading his story to the group. The rest of the students in the class began shuffling about, making their transition to their next activity. The class became quite noisy, and it became difficult to hear Nathan as he read his story. Even Tirzah moved her attention away from Nathan so she could remind the rest of the class to move quietly. Yet, the rest of Nathan's group, Pam, Shannelle, and Melissa, leaned in toward Nathan so they could hear him as he read slowly and quietly. By this time, Tirzah's next group of students was becoming impatient, creating quite a ruckus as they anxiously peered over the group that was still seated and listening intently to Nathan as he read. Just as Nathan finished his story, Tirzah politely suggested, "How about if we stop here today, and let Nathan read his story again first thing tomorrow." At this suggestion, Nathan and the rest of his friends appeared to be in agreement, and I expected that the group would now move on. Instead however, Pam, Shannelle, and Melissa stayed in their seats, and without hesitation, Pam turned herself toward Nathan and said, "I like the part where you talked about how bats have their babies." Interestingly, the other students as well, began to take turns with comments and questions for Nathan. As they did this, it was interesting to see how each of them adjusted their bodies to lean further in toward the table and toward Nathan,

nearly laying across the table as if to prevent the other, seemingly disintersted classmates from destroying what they as a group had worked so hard to accomplish. What became evident to me at that moment was that in no uncertain terms this group of young writers was not going to allow the rest of the class, nor their teacher, to interrupt this important work.

This story of Nathan and his writing partners is significant, because it illustrates how students in the inclusion class (special education and general education) had come to internalize the norms and values of a literacy community that engendered respect for one another's literacy accomplishments. This story also illustrates how several of the students in this class had come to value the social enterprise of literacy, and had learned to take their responsibilities as readers and writers quite seriously. Finally, this story is an important one because it illustrates that students with learning disabilities, for whom high expectations are held, and for whom the cognitive tools of literacy have been provided, can participate in higher order literacy in meaningful and productive ways.

Andrew Reads: In Front of the *Whole* School

One of the most poignant examples illustrating the impact of 'community' on students' participation in literacy was observed at a school assembly. In mid-December, I video-taped an evening program at Avon School. The program, whose theme was "Celebrating Diversity" was attended by parents, teachers, and students. Each class at Avon participated in the program in various ways.

For example, one class demonstrated an African tribal dance, while another class presented a skit about a Mexican Fiesta.

As their contribution to the assembly, Marie and Tirzah's class chose to read the reports they had written as part of their thematic unit on Native Americans. I found it interesting that a class comprised of so many students who had experienced a history of school failure in reading would actually *choose* to read aloud in front of such a large group of people. In fact, it seems to be more the case that when special education students are asked to participate in school-wide programs such as this, their participation is often limited, where the "special ed kids" either sing a song, or pass out programs at the door. This would not be the case however, for Marie and Tirzah's class.

On this special occasion, I observed Andrew, a former ELP student in Marie's class, and now a student in the inclusion classroom read his report entitled, "How Indians Get Their Food". As Andrew prepared to read from his illustrated folder, his general education classmate, Tyrone stood just behind and barely to the left of Andrew. Tyrone was a good foot shorter than Andrew, so he stood on his tip-toes in order to follow along with Andrew's text. As Andrew read aloud, Tyrone's eyes followed along and his lips silently formed the words of Andrew's text. Tyrone continued to position himself in close proximity to Andrew, ready to assist Andrew if he stumbled. With only a few hesitations however, Andrew made it through his report successfully, sighing with relief (and an enormous grin), then moving aside to let Tyrone (also smiling, and showing signs of great relief) read next.

As I listened to Andrew read his report, I thought about what an accomplishment this was for Andrew, given the fact that last year he had been considered a non-reader. I was also moved by Tyrone's readiness to assist Andrew in the event that he stumbled. Later, I shared my reactions with Marie. She then filled me in on what had happened just before the students were to go on stage to read their reports.

Marie explained that when the class lined up in the hallway, preparing to make their way to the stage in the gym, she noticed that Andrew wasn't there. When she inquired about this, Tyrone explained to Marie that Andrew "got scared" and went back home. However, just as the class was getting ready to enter the gym, Andrew came back, winded from his bike ride, and sneakers drenched from the snow, yet ready to join his class in their presentation.

Andrew's change-of-heart to participate in the school program is another example of how students in Marie and Tirzah's class demonstrated their responsibility to the literacy community. Andrew's apprehension about reading in front of a large group of people was not surprising, given the fact that he and his peers recognized that reading was a real challenge for him. Yet, his last-minute decision to participate with the rest of his peers in a publication and celebration of their collective research efforts illustrates Andrews' accountability to the larger literacy community to which he belonged. Furthermore, as Andrew and other students in Marie and Tirzah's classroom came to the understanding that reading and writing accomplishments were often the result of a joint and supported effort between teachers and students, students in this classroom were more willing to

take risks in the literacy community, finding comfort in the belief that "friends

help friends" and "we all work together."

Students' Reading Achievement in the Inclusion Classroom

Although this study was designed to answer questions involving the

nature of teachers' and students' *participation* in the process of inclusion as it

related to the collaborative implementation of an integrated, curriculur approach

to literacy learning (the ELP Curriculum), the question still remains: Did this

process and the curriculum make a difference in terms of students'

achievement?

As discussed in Chapter Three, The Slosson Test of Oral Reading

(SORT) had been administered to students at the beginning and at the end of

the school year. The SORT scores of the general and the special education

students are presented in Table 2. The table shows the pretest and posttest

scores for all the students and their reading gains from pretest to posttest. For

students who moved into the inclusion class midyear, I have indicated the month

and date of their entry into the program in the right-most column. This

information is important because it corresponds to the month that the SORT was

given, with implications for how much reading gain the students might be

expected to to demonstrate (e.g., 3 months' gain for 3 months in the program).

The results indicate that of the 14 special education students, 13 students

made 1 month of gain or more for each month they participated in the program.

This result is important because it shows that students can continue to make

Table 2: Students' Pre and Post Scores on Slosson Oral Reading Test

Student	Grade	Pre	Post	Gain	
Brandon	2	5.7	6.3	+0.6	
Carmen	3 SE/EI	3.2	3.7	+0.5	
Charles	2 SE/LD	0.4	0.9	+0.5	♦(2/25)
Dustin	2 SE/LD	0.3	0.9	+0.6	♦(2/25)
Ellen	2 SE/LD	0.8	1.3	+0.5	♦(2/25)
Ethan	2	1.5	5.1	+3.6	
Jack	3 SE/LD	2.7	5.4	+2.7	
Jasmine	2	2.6	3.9	+1.3	
Jessie	2	2.0	5.1	+3.1	
Jillian	2 SE/LD	1.2	1.4	+0.2	
Lionel	2 SE/LD	0.4	1.4	+1.0	
Melissa	2	1.5	3.7	+2.2	
Miguel	2	0.2	3.1	+2.9	
Pam	3 SE/LD	1.7	4.4	+2.7	
Priscilla	3 SE/LD	2.1	3.1	+1.0	♦(2/15)
Raeanne	3 SE/LD	2.0	2.9	+0.9	
Raymond	2 SE/EI	1.5	2.3	+0.8	♦(3/8)
Shannele	3 SE/LD	1.6	2.6	+1.0	
Tam	3 SE/LD	1.5	2.5	+1.0	
Thomas	2 SE/LD	0.8	2.4	+1.6	♦(2/25)
Tyrone	2	2.8	4.4	+1.6	

SE/LD: Special Education Student/Learning Disability

SE/EI: Special Education Student/Emotional Impairment

♦ Students who entered the inclusion class mid-year and beyond made month-for-month gains.

progress in general education when the curricular approach is embedded in the general education curriculum. Instead of falling behind, the students gained at levels that were commensurate with the month-for-month gains expected for general education students. However, because some of the students started the program behind grade level, many of the special education students were still behind grade level at the end of the year. Of the entire group of special education students, 6 students were performing near or above grade level (Jack, Pam, Priscilla, Raeanne, Raymond, Thomas) at the end of the school year. Thus, the ELP curricular approach showed potential for successful implementation in general education settings, although it is unclear at this point whether the same longitudinal gains (catching students up to grade level) could be achieved if this approach were to be implemented for more than 1 year.

It is apparent that the general education students also benefitted from the ELP curricular approach. Despite the fact that there were 14 students with disabilities in their classroom, general education students made large gains in reading performance. In fact, the majority of general education students gained over 1 year on the SORT, including Ethan (3.6 grade levels), Jasmine (1.3), Jessie (3.1), Melissa (2.2), Miguel (2.9), and Tyrone (1.6). Only one of the general education students failed to make substantial gains in the program-- Brandon (0.6). Thus, what had been designed for students with disabilities seemed effective with general education students.

Summary

The features of inclusive teaching described in this chapter provided the special education students in Marie and Tirzah's classroom with the supports they needed in order to re-define their roles as learners, and find their 'voices' as readers and writers in the larger community of general education. First, *helping students build community* was critical to this process because traditional special education pull-out practices have typically resulted in fragmented educational programs where special education students often experience confusion about where they 'belong.' What became evident in Marie and Tirzah's classroom, is that all students, including those students with disabilities eventually found their place as active and contributing members in the literacy community.

Second, the limited participation structures available to special education students in traditional programs have typically denied students access to the kinds of inquiry-related activity that propel students' learning (Engler & Mariage, 1996), and have similarly provided limited opportunites for teachers to engage in more authentic assessment of 'what' and 'how 'students know. Marie and Tirzah's students however, were affored participation structures that enabled them to *maintain high levels of engagement in literacy acts*, thus providing students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their capablities, and providing Marie and Tirzah greater opportunity to assess students' understanding on a moment-to-moment basis to create new zones of learning for students.

Finally, Marie and Tirzah's persistence to *help all students find their personal points of entry into the literacy discourse of the classroom* similarly influenced the process of inclusion in positive ways. Unlike many special education students in traditional programs who typically struggle to connect to literacy in meaningful ways, the special education students in Marie and Tirzah's classroom were provided access to the critical tools of literacy that enabled them to participate in the literacy community in meaningful ways, *and helped students to empower themselves as readers and writers.*

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