

Engaging and Inclusive Education: A Case Study

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2016

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

The goal of education is to enrich the lives of the students entering the classroom in such a way that sees them leaving after the school year as better and more developed students eager to continue learning. However, there has been a disconnect between educators and the population of their classrooms that requires modifications and special attention. In part, this is because it is time consuming and difficult to make sure that every student, including the handicapped students, is having his or her needs met. In order for classrooms to be effective, there has to be an inclusive environment that seeks to engage the students where they are and an educator that is committed to the learning of all the students. For this to be effective, the teacher will have to discover each student's individual needs, strengths, interests, and passions. When an educator is committed to doing this and to following through with the information, the classroom experience will be much improved for all students (Cox, 2009).

Key words: differentiation, inclusion, inclusive education, modifications, accommodations, individualized education program

Engaging and Inclusive Education: A Case Study

Students entering a classroom deserve to be given the best possible chance to achieve their individual potentials and self-determined goals. The classroom should be enriching the lives of the students entering it in such a way that the students leaving the classroom are not the same ones that entered it at the beginning of the year. Each student should be given the tools to grow, develop, and be encouraged to continue learning and exploring. An outcome such as this is made possible when educators are committed to providing an environment that has a positive impact on the whole-being development of each student. Unfortunately, with the growth of inclusive education, the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom, educators have found it more difficult to make sure each student's needs are being met (Marshall-Reed, 2010). It can be challenging to make sure that a student with a learning disability, a gifted student, a student with a physical handicap, and the general education students are all being given opportunities to excel, all at the same time. It becomes necessary for an educator to take in so much information in order to ensure that an effective classroom environment is achieved and that the students that are coming in with different disabilities are being given the chance to succeed.

Importance of Inclusion

There are many factors that an educator must take into consideration when creating the best possible environment for the students in the classroom. Each student is bringing to the classroom his or her own unique blend of interests, strengths, weaknesses, and a type of learning style (King, 2010). Therefore, the need to create classroom

environments that are student-centered as opposed to teacher-centered is vital to the future of effective education. A need is created for inclusion and differentiation to be used to create an environment that engages and helps to develop each student. The combination of individual need, with the entire learning profile of a student, points to the necessity of inclusion and differentiation. Inclusion is a principle that allows for students that have special educational needs and disabilities to have the opportunities and full participation in society that a regular classroom would offer its students (Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014). Differentiation is a form of teaching that is student-centered. Teachers that use differentiated practices in the classroom take into consideration the needs of the students as individuals, in order to create the most effective learning environment that meets the needs of everyone. Educators need to focus on the needs of their students when attempting to create the most engaging environment made to meet the needs of each student (Beam, 2009).

Students with disabilities and handicaps need to be leaving the classroom at the end of the year having been given all the opportunities necessary to continue developing their potential, to continue growing their strengths, and to work on overcoming their weaknesses. The inclusive classroom allows for these advances to be made. Educators across the field will benefit from research on inclusion because it seeks to provide practical information that can easily be applied to the real classroom. Those in charge of teaching the next generation should understand why the inclusive classroom exists and why educators must be committed to its success in order for it to actually succeed.

Understanding Inclusion

Sources that are readily available for research have been examined in order to present information in three areas: the inclusive classroom, differentiated instruction and learner-centered environments, and the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. Understanding the characteristics of the inclusive classroom is vital for educators that are having to embrace it. Differentiated instruction is a tool for teachers to use when ensuring that the lessons are reaching such a wide range of students. Instruction that embraces differentiation will help to create learner-centered environments. However, attitude directly influences excellence. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look into how the attitudes of educators in regards to inclusive education influences the classroom environment and the students.

The Inclusive Classroom

The process of creating an inclusive classroom involves the placement of a student with special needs in the least restrictive environment possible (Marshall-Reed, 2010). Federal laws and regulations support inclusive classrooms for students with disabilities. In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 requiring states to provide education to students with disabilities. In 1990 (with revisions in 1997), The U.S. Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) replaced PL 94-142 and provided regulations that had to be implemented in public and private institutions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible (Martin, 2010). Section 300.114 LRE (a)(2) of IDEA states:

Each public agency must ensure that: (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (“Sec. 300.114 LRE requirements,” n.d.)

The provisions made in the act apply to students ages 3 through 21 (Soukakou, Winton, West, Sideris, & Rucker, 2014). In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted, furthering support for inclusive education. The regulations that have been set forth in the different acts have raised accountability for teachers and schools to ensure that inclusive education practices are taking place in the classroom (Martin, 2010).

An inclusive classroom can be challenging. Teachers are required to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. In order to meet these needs and make inclusion work, teachers have to plan accordingly. A process such as this involves taking into consideration the individual needs of each student, his or her learning profile, and his or her interests (King, 2010). When these factors are considered, along with the student’s strengths, talents, and prior knowledge, a teacher is able to formulate lessons and activities that will engage the student in learning (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005).

Broderick et al. (2005) pointed out that disabilities manifest themselves differently in different students. Even if several students have a disability with the same label, the students will naturally experience it differently. Two students might have a diagnosed learning disability that affects their reading skills, but one student might have a more hard-working attitude when compared to the other. Possibly, this could affect the learning outcomes for the students. Another example could be two students, each with a physical handicap that affects their range of motion in the classroom, will see the results of a disability manifested differently as they try participate in an activity. One student might have prior knowledge that tells him or her how to overcome the physical disability in order to participate. The other student might have to work a little longer deciding how best to do the work while working around what is physically holding him or her back. Therefore, for effective inclusion practices to be implemented, there is much that a teacher must take into consideration.

Jordan, Schwartz, and McGhie-Richmond (2009) argued that an effective inclusion classroom is directly related to effective teaching practices. Again, this is where differentiated instruction becomes an essential tool for the teacher's use. Modification of curriculum, as well as the physical environment, accommodates the different needs found in the inclusive classroom (Broderick et. al., 2005). The environment of the classroom should be inviting for students and encouraging for participation in the lesson. Teachers in an inclusive classroom might benefit from the use of grouping. A requirement of this kind of grouping would be the flexibility of allowing the students to move around without restrictions. Therefore, an inclusive classroom might have students working at tables, on

the rugs, at the computers, and in the beanbag chairs at the same time. A teacher in this environment could move from group to group, providing extra small group attention to the students that could be vital to their success and to make sure that individual needs are being met (Tomlinson & Eidson, 2003).

In the inclusive classroom, there is a range of students bringing with them a unique variety of needs, interests, strengths, weaknesses, and more to the environment. What the teacher does with the knowledge of these factors will impact the students and their development, because it is not just what is taught, but how the material is taught that matters (Gould & Vaughn, 2000). The inclusive approach to education is meant to provide all students with an equal opportunity to embrace their personal potential and succeed. The impact left on each student when the inclusive classroom environment is embraced should be positive (Spasovski, 2010).

Differentiated Instruction and Learner-Centered Environments

Differentiated instruction is the use of modifications, accommodations, and varied learning strategies to reach a range of students (Rollins, 2011). Carol A. Tomlinson stated, “Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction.” (as cited in Gray, 2008, p. 8). Another way to view differentiation is to see it as “making space” to meet the needs that are brought by the individuals to the classroom (Wilson, 2009, p. 68). Differentiated instruction should be the primary tool used by educators to engage students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom (Gray, 2008).

When a student is diagnosed with a disability, he or she often becomes known by that diagnosis. “Students are reduced to a set of behaviors or skills, their weaknesses the basis from which educators know them” (Wong, 2010, p. 31). This mindset in a classroom creates an unwelcoming environment with a negative impact for true learning. When a child becomes the label, all that anyone is able to see are the weaknesses. No one focuses on the present strengths. Nothing is done to help achievement in academics, social behaviors, and just the ability to see one’s potential. The encouragement that would come from just one person seeing the potential in this student would be enough to change a world of classrooms.

Wong (2010) presented a solution to the problem that involved students with disabilities flying under the radar and not getting the attention they deserve: differentiation. Differentiation allows for the learner variances to be addressed in the classroom. Every student would be able to learn and advance. However, not all teachers are open to differentiation. Wong (2010) outlined six reasons why this is so:

- Educators have a lack of knowledge, skills and confidence. They do not believe in their own abilities to teach such a wide variety of learners.
- There is a lack of adequate time for planning and the collaboration necessary for effective lessons to be designed.
- There is an assumption that modifications are exempt from responsibility.
- There are limitations with materials, class size, and environment. In reality there is normally only one teacher and so many different students.

- Teachers do not want to draw attention to the differences among the students for fear of embarrassment or bullying. However, differences are beautiful and should be celebrated.
- There is a belief that the adaptations made in the classroom are not realistic for the real world.

However, it must be taken into consideration that a student with disabilities will not even be slightly prepared for the real world without the modifications made in the classroom. These modifications are not a crutch, but a gift for the student with a disability or a physical handicap.

In creating an engaging and inclusive classroom, teachers that combine differentiated instruction with a learner-centered classroom create what is probably the most effective environment for students with disabilities. Bishop, Caston, and King (2014) discussed information regarding what a learner-centered classroom is and how it is effective in meeting the needs of its students. Students in a learner-centered classroom are given the opportunity to take some control of their educational experiences and are given the ability to decide between different ways of going about learning different concepts. The goal of learner-centered education is to condition teachers to ask this question when designing their classrooms day by day: “Given the context of my students, course and classroom, will this teaching action optimize my students’ opportunity to learn” (Bishop et al., 2014, p. 46)? When teachers become conditioned to ask this question during their planning, the outcome will be student-centered approaches to education advancements in the classroom. In order to answer this question, a teacher will

have to assess the individual needs of the classroom. He or she will work to see that every need is being met, creating a student-centered, need-meeting environment that optimizes learning.

Bishop et al. (2014) presented four steps to becoming a learner-centered classroom. The first step is changing how human learning is perceived. The perception of human learning needs to evolve until it takes into consideration that the brain responds well when it is actively engaged and repeatedly engaged. An educator can take this information and apply it to lesson planning. Lesson planning can then include strategies that promote engagement and active participation, such as hands-on activities, group work, small group discussion, songs, and games. An effective classroom gets students involved in the learning process in a personal way, keeping the brain engaged for the purpose of retaining the knowledge, and reaching higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Weigel & Bonica, 2014). Bloom's Taxonomy relates to the concept that students have to be engaged in order to learn. Bloom's includes six levels of thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Knowledge is basic understanding and only represents the lowest level of Bloom's. Performance at this level would show that a student can remember the information but not necessarily apply it in different ways. Synthesis is creation, and evaluation is justification. The ability to perform at these top two levels demonstrates the highest learning. These levels promote brain engagement and should be used when planning effective lessons (Weigel & Bonica, 2014).

The second step for changing to a learner-centered classroom is changing the classroom to help prepare students for their futures. Several aspects of the learner-centered classroom promote preparation for future classrooms, higher-learning, and society (Bishop et al., 2014). For example, a teacher that is preparing his or her classroom to become student-centered might try splitting the class into jigsaw groups. A jigsaw group involves cooperation and collaboration. To complete a jigsaw assignment, students are divided into groups. These groups then each become mini-experts on one facet of a broader topic. Group one studies subtopic A, Group two studies subtopic B, and so on. Then, one member from each joins with one representative of every other group to form a new group. Each member of the new group gets a chance to teach on the subtopic that they studied. Jigsaw activities promote engagement of students and an opportunity to take personal control of learning. These are both aspects of a student-centered learning. Also, the jigsaw activity gives students a chance to prepare for the aspects of life that they will soon need to be prepared for. There are so many opportunities in high school, college, and career in which students are going to need to collaborate, cooperate, and present what they know (Souvignier & Kronenberger, 2007).

The third step to changing to a learner-centered classroom is getting students to grasp that learning is a life-long process. Learning does not stop at any point in life. Students must become capable of independent learning, therefore promoting an understanding of life-long learning. In the classroom, students should be given opportunities to do independent work. This goes way beyond a worksheet or a homework assignment. Students need to be engaged with their independent work. They need to be

excited about it. Students should have a say in what this independent work is going to be. Perhaps this means that the student is going to get the opportunity to decide how to go about the completion of his or her next assignment, allowing the student to pick a method that reflects his or her abilities (Bishop et al., 2014).

The fourth, and final step to changing to a learner-centered classroom is transitioning students' thinking to encompass the idea that what each of them is learning today, is important tomorrow. In order to create an effective, engaging, and inclusive classroom, students need to understand that learning builds on itself. Even for the younger grades, viewing learning as something important, not just something parents force them to do can be life changing in a young person and lead to independent learners ready to take control of what the real world has to offer them (Bishop et al., 2014).

The Attitudes of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

The inclusive classroom affects both special education teachers and general education teachers. The attitudes of the teachers regarding inclusive education will impact the class because, "What teachers do to facilitate a good learning environment and adaptive education for everyone is critical if inclusive education is to succeed" (Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004, p. 95). Without a positive outlook on inclusive education, there will not be the commitment necessary to ensure that the environment will work for the students because all aspects of how the material is taught and received will be affected (Martin, 2010).

Monsen et al. (2014) have examined the importance of teacher attitudes in regards to inclusion. Just as with any job or career, not every employee is going to be ecstatic

over every facet of the work that he or she is required to do. The same goes for educators. However, it should be noted that attitude compromises outcome for better or for worse. In this case, the attitudes held by educators in regards to inclusion may determine whether the implementation of the principle is effective or not.

Monsen et al. (2014) stated

Teachers who embraced personal responsibility and who were receptive to the notion of inclusion were more likely to adapt their classroom learning environment to meet the needs of a range of pupils through varied teaching approaches, high-quality and effective instruction, regular monitoring of progress and focused teacher and parent/career collaboration. (p. 115)

Varied teaching approaches involve differentiation, which present curriculum to the students in order to achieve active learning. High-quality and effective instruction comes from teachers that are instructed in the best teaching methods and stay up-to-date on educational advances and improvements. These teachers are active in continual learning, to better their classrooms. Regular monitoring of progress involves constant supervision and the occasional screening of students when necessary. Monitoring is especially important for students that have special needs and disabilities. For example, if a learning method is not working and a student is falling behind in the comprehension of a new mathematics concept, constant monitoring of progress will allow the teacher to pinpoint the problem and work with the student to get back on track before too much time is lost. Teacher and parent or caregiver collaboration is vital to effective inclusive education. The teacher is demonstrating to the parent that he or she is involved in the student's

development when trying to collaborate with the parents. Other than the primary caregivers, not many other people know the student as well. Collaboration creates a hard-working team set on making sure that the student succeeds. Educators that understand all of this and embrace it are setting up an effective and engaging environment for their students to achieve in (Royce, 2008).

Monsen et al. (2014) introduced three types of teachers. The first type is the one that is willing to implement inclusive educational strategies into the classroom with adequate support. Teachers that fall into this category embrace inclusive education when there are enough hands to help run it. It is vital that a teacher is given aids when trying to handle a classroom that incorporates so many different types of children (Cox, 2009). A classroom that has gifted and talented students, average students, students identified as struggling readers, students with ADHD, students with emotional disorders, and students with autism will create an environment in which a teacher would need to be given the means to make learning effective.

The second type of teacher is the one that considers inclusive education to be disadvantageous to the other students in the classroom that do not have disabilities. If a child with a learning disability were placed in a classroom with a teacher such as this, that child unfortunately may not succeed. He or she would not receive the support necessary to be fully included in the classroom, which is necessary for effective education. The teacher would not take the time to invest in the student with the disability if he or she honestly believes that the student's presence is disadvantageous. Goals may

not be met. Progress may not be evident. This student would most likely be at a disadvantage, not the other students in the classroom (Monsen et al., 2014).

The third type of teacher mentioned in the article is someone that views the needs of inclusive education as a service that the mainstream school is not able to meet (Monsen et al., 2014). The educator will wonder if he or she is really qualified or able to meet the needs of this student in the class. In some cases, teachers have expressed actual fear of having students with disabilities in their classrooms (Vaidya, 1997). They will wonder if they have the training and the tools that will be needed. Collaboration is vital here. Collaboration between teachers of the mainstream classrooms and special education specialists can lead to the creation of a variety of strategies useful for the creation of an effective, inclusive environment (Monsen et al., 2014).

Monsen et al. (2014) demonstrated how it is necessary for educators to be committed to the purposes of inclusion in order for it to be effectively implemented. Teachers need to see the potential in each of their wide-ranging students. This will lead to the development of instructional strategies that encompasses the different needs of the students.

Students, whether average, gifted, or handicapped, should be given the opportunity to succeed in the classroom. Modifications should be made if this means that a student will get the chance to really see the potential that he or she possess. The ability to see this will spark the fire that a student needs to be excited to learn and grow. The teacher is the one with the power to make a student believe in himself/herself. Therefore, the classroom environment that they set up will determine the success. The classroom

needs to be engaging, inclusive, and able to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of the students. Altogether, this will determine success.

Research Questions

A series of questions guided this study.

1. What were the educational experiences of one handicapped student in an inclusive environment?
2. What were the components of an effective inclusive classroom environment as described by one handicapped student and her mother? (Marshall-Reed, 2010; Spasovski, 2010).
3. What must be taken into consideration in order for the best student-centered classroom to be created? (Bishop, Caston, & King, 2014)
4. How does differentiated instruction contribute to the formation of a student-centered environment that is conducive to the physically handicapped student? (Gray, 2008; Wong, 2010)
5. How did the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education affect the handicapped student? (Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014).

Method

Participants

The case study provides a real-life, real situation look into the effect of different classroom and educator characteristics through the experiences of a physically handicapped student. There were two participants in this case study. One is currently a high school senior with a physical disability, and the other is the student's mother. The

case study focuses primarily on the student, as it is her educational experiences that are being examined. The mother was included in the study because of her added perspective and insight. The mother has a degree in elementary education; therefore, she was able to add information to the conversation from the teacher-at-heart mentality. This was extremely beneficial to the study. The research subject (the student) has physical disabilities that have her in a wheelchair and with the need for several accommodations in the classroom. This handicap is what made this participant specifically fall in the category of being eligible for participation in this study.

Procedure

Before conducting this study, the researcher gained approval to do human research from the Institutional Review Board. See Appendix A. Before participating in the study, the research subject, her mother, and the researcher signed a consent form. See Appendix B. Consent was given to interview and record the conversation. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study and what would be required of each participant.

For the interview, I asked the research subject and her mother each a series of questions (Appendix C) and allowed them plenty of time to answer and build on each other's questions. I then transcribed the interview (Appendix D). After transcribing the interview, I went through the dialogue looking for themes that related back to my original research questions. I specifically look for information that related back to the research questions. When an answer given by the research subject or her mother correlated directly with a research question, I highlighted it in the transcription. I used this information to draw conclusions.

Materials

An interview with the research subject and her mother provided supplementary information and perspective for the purpose of answering the research questions and expounding upon the research that has already been done on inclusive education. The participants were each asked a series of questions (Appendix C) about educational experiences both as a participant (the student) and as a support structure (the mother). The interview questions were written to develop conversation that would provide additional information in support of the prior research. The questions give the research subject and her mother a chance to discuss differentiated practices (Thompson, 2009), teacher attitudes (Monsen et al., 2014), and the quality of the inclusive classrooms that the research subject has been in (Vaidya, 1997).

Results

The interview provided insight into the student's pursuit of education while being handicapped and a participant in the inclusive classroom. The research subject's mother was able to complement the answers given by the research subject as well as provide more information in a few different areas. The information gathered from the interview directly related back to the research questions. Their responses are recorded in the transcription found in Appendix D.

Research Question #1 was "What were the educational experiences of one handicapped student in an inclusive environment?" At the beginning of the interview, the research subject discussed the different schools that she has attended. Throughout her pursuit of education, the research subject has attended public and private school and has

participated in homeschooling. When she was in the general classroom, she had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that allowed for certain accommodations and modifications. For example, due to her wheelchair, she needed accommodations to access tables, desks, and materials. Due to having poor hand control, she was allowed to type instead of write assignments. When the educators focused on meeting these needs, the research subject was able to have a positive experience in the classroom. However, teachers in the student's classroom did not always follow the goals outlined in the plan. Therefore, the experiences were not all positive. The research subject has spent the last few years doing homeschooling. Her mother has a degree in elementary education and is able to make sure that the student's learning style and personality traits are incorporated into the learning process. The student is also able to work more independently in this environment. The research subject experienced a variety of ways to pursue an education, but the most positive ones have been the experiences in which the educator took into consideration her needs and followed through with this information.

Research Question #2 was "What were the components of an effective inclusive classroom environment as described by one handicapped student and her mother?" The inclusive classroom is meant to give students with handicaps and disabilities access to the least restrictive environment possible (Marshall-Reed, 2010). An environment that takes into consideration the individual needs of each student as well as the interests and passions of each student, creates the ability to have engaging instruction (Broderick, et al., 2005). The research subject discussed with me how the most positive experiences she had in the classroom were with educators that took the time to get to know her. The

educators that knew her abilities and her potential were the ones that were able to connect with her. Also, the teachers that took her physical comfort seriously made for comfortable learning. When a teacher (or her mother) allowed her to get work done out of her wheelchair, he or she was giving the research subject an accommodation that created a more comfortable learning environment. Also, making sure that everything was accessible to the student made for a more effective classroom experience. Sometimes, the research subject would not be able to do something as simple as reach her pencil box that was placed at the edge of her bed. Therefore, when I asked the research subject to imagine the best possible classroom, she mentioned that the educator would "...make sure I could reach everything, have everything on my level, easy to access." The comfort of the classroom was a theme that ran throughout several answers given by the student and her mother. Once this comfort and ease of access to materials was accomplished, the student would be able to participate in the lessons.

Research Question #3 was "What must be taken into consideration in order for the best student-centered classroom to be created?" When students are in a student-centered classroom, they are given the opportunity to take some control of their educational experiences (Bishop et al., 2014). The research subject demonstrated this concept most during her discussion of her homeschooling experiences. She set her daily, weekly, and yearly goals. She decided that she wanted to learn how to drive a car in addition to her school work. She pursued different ways of reaching different goals. As she has gotten older, her mother mentioned that her independence has soared. She runs into a problem, but she tries to fix it. Independence is a goal of the student-centered classroom (Bishop et

al., 2014). When the research subject switched from public school to homeschooling, she did not necessarily have to be in school the entire day. She was able to work at her own pace and finish earlier. The mother also mentioned the importance of having an educator that would recognize and actually put into practice that every student learns differently would be revolutionary in the inclusive classroom. The individual needs, accommodations, and personal learning styles should all be taken into consideration in order to create the best student-centered environment.

Research Question #4 was “How does differentiated instruction contribute to the formation of a student-centered environment that is conducive to the physically handicapped student?” Differentiation is a tool that an educator can use to address the learner variances in the classroom (Wong, 2010). The educators in the inclusive classroom should use differentiation to engage each individual student (Gray, 2008). However, not all teachers embrace this form of teaching. Some lack the skills necessary to implement differentiation. Some do not plan in advance for it (Wong, 2010). In the interview, the research subject and her mother both emphasized the need for differentiated practices in the classroom. The research subject’s mother mentioned that there were a few things that would happen in the classroom that would cause feelings of stress for the research subject. For example, the research subject was not able to focus during large-group testing. She would worry about other students working faster or finishing first. She would become concerned for her own time and ability to finish. Therefore, the teacher decided a different testing environment would benefit the research subject. The educator took into consideration the need of the research subject to have a

different environment in order to perform to the best of her ability. The research subject's mother also discussed the need for the teacher to try different teaching methods with different students. Her background in elementary education helped her explain this better. She mentioned that the educator of an inclusive classroom should be willing to adjust his or her teaching methods in order to accommodate a student that "learn[s] better by repetition...learn[s] better by hands-on and seeing." She also said that the teacher of this classroom should not be "so set in their ways." Being unwilling to change the classroom for a student's needs goes back to Wong's (2010) discussion of why teachers are not willing to implement differentiated practices. Some teachers believe that adaptations are not realistic for the real world. However, if these adaptations are not made in the classroom, the student is not going to be able to reach or discover his or her potential. Given the tools to succeed is what is going to help students with disabilities and handicaps work towards the real world.

Research Question #5 was "How did the attitude of the teachers towards inclusive education affect the handicapped student?" Monsen et al. (2014) discussed the need to have inclusive classroom educators that took personal responsibility for the students in their classrooms. This commitment created a positive outlook on inclusive education, which is necessary for effective education (Martin, 2010). The research subject and her mother both discussed how the attitudes of different educators affected the environment and the interactions. I asked the mother if she had ever had to confront an educator that was not working to meet the needs of her daughter. She gave me an example from a time that she did have to have a serious conversation with an educator that was not following

the research subject's IEP. The mother mentioned that the main issue for the teacher was having to get out of routine and do something different. Not being committed to following the IEP and working towards helping the student that has it reach the goals outlined in the plan is not a representation of commitment to inclusive education. During the interview, I asked the research subject to describe to me the most encouraging educator that she had ever had. One name was quickly mentioned, and I asked to elaborate. The research subject described for me a teacher that was very in tune to the needs of the students and was able to form relationships with each student. I also asked the research subject to describe for her idea of the best teacher. According to her description, this teacher would be "a relatable one and one that would be able to pay attention to my needs...if I was to ask for something or just one that wouldn't ignore my disabilities and would help me out if I needed it." A teacher that fits this description is one that is committed to ensuring that each student is engaged, appreciated, and given the opportunity to succeed.

Discussion

The answers to the questions given in the interview did provide valuable insight into the experiences had by a handicapped student in a variety of classrooms with a variety of educators. There is another over-arching theme from the interview that is worthwhile of discussion because, when examined, it can be related to many topics stemming from the original research questions. The theme that ran throughout the answers from the research subject and her mother was intentionality. The definition of the word "intentionality" is "the fact of being deliberate and purposive" ("Intentionality,"

n.d.). This word captures what an educator should be and then relates to the impact that he or she has on the students in an inclusive environment.

“Deliberate” (“Intentionality,” n.d.) is the first part of the definition of intentionality. Being deliberate involves being considerate in planning, careful in approach, and mindful of outcome. An educator that is considerate in planning will take into account the IEPs of the students and any other special, personal needs that should be met in the classroom when planning for a lesson. The research subject’s teacher in her 5th grade English class that did not pay her IEP any attention was not considerate in planning. He did not allow her to bring in typed essays, even though her IEP allowed for the typing modification. The research subject also required certain physical needs to be met because of her disability. There were certain situations in which she wouldn’t be able to do something as simple as reach her pencil box. She had to rely on others to help her. Therefore, a considerate educator would use this knowledge of her physical disability when planning for the layout of the lesson and the passing out and use of materials. Planning in such a way that the classroom becomes more accessible for a handicapped student will create a more relaxed environment.

An educator that is careful in approach will know what methods work best for his or her students. This relates back to the need for differentiated instruction. The process by which educational approaches are differentiated considers each student’s “existing knowledge, skill level, and conceptual understanding” (Thompson, 2009, p. 3) when deciding how to approach the methods used to present and teach a concept to a group of students. The use of differentiated strategies in the teaching approach to an inclusive

classroom gives the educator a chance to engage each student in deliberate learning activities (Lange, 2009). The research subject's mother alluded to the need to have educators that were focused on the individual needs of the student. This attention to approach would lead to a positive educational impact on the development of the whole-being of the student.

An educator that is mindful of outcome uses assessment data to ensure that what is being done in the classroom is achieving the purpose set forth in the planning period. For students with IEP goals, this assessment data might have to be more specific to their individual needs (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). The research subject had a resource teacher that would remove her from the class during testing to test in a different environment to ensure an assessment outcome that represented her abilities. This would give her teacher a chance to evaluate the progress made toward achieving her goals. When an educator is mindful of outcome, better choices and plans can be made regarding the future steps of ensuring that the student's needs are being met and a positive impact is being left.

The second half of the definition of intentionality incorporates the word "purposive" ("Intentionality, n.d.). Educators that are purposive are driven to create classroom environments and lessons that promote the achievement of the goals set forth. Educators that lack this quality are unable to plan ahead for their students. The research subject mentioned several times that she wanted a teacher that would be in tune to her needs she had because of her disability. She did not want the teacher to ignore the disability in order to make her feel included. The disability is part of who she is. She wants a teacher that would take the disability into consideration when planning for the

layout of the classroom and the methods used for instruction. This would enable the teacher to be purposive in creating the best possible scenarios for learning for the research subject and other students with handicaps and disabilities.

The combination of the qualities of being deliberate and being purposive creates the intentional teacher. The intentional teacher is aware of his or her student's needs, abilities, personal goals, and interests. The research subject's mother discussed with me that she believes a teacher should have a relationship with each student so that he or she can truly understand the needs that each student is bringing to the classroom. A relationship allows for the chance to truly know someone. In the classroom, an educator can use this relationship to come to an understanding of what each student likes and dislikes, how they learn best, and what needs that they might have that are not necessarily easy to see. For students with handicaps and disabilities, this relationship allows a teacher to see past any stereotypes and engage the student in a way that promotes the highest form of learning. When this is all considered, a masterful education plan can be created to meet the needs of the student. A student with any handicaps or disabilities will be able to see that any special needs that they must have met are being considered so that his or her time in the classroom is being optimized. The lasting impact from this dedication to meeting the needs of each student is being left in the hearts of the students.

The research subject did spend time in a homeschooling environment, and it is important to note that the educator in this environment, her mother, was still as intentional and impactful as the traditional educator. The mother took the time necessary to plan the curriculum and ensure that the environment that the research subject was

learning in was comfortable enough to meet her physical needs. The mother mentioned that sometimes, the research subject would do school work while lying in bed. If she was comfortable, she was able to focus. The mother was also aware of what teaching methods worked best for her daughter. She understood that her daughter needed to be actively engaged in the material in order to remember the concepts and apply them to future work. This took care of her mental needs, and her needs for academic advancement. Her emotional needs were taken care of in this setting. In the public school setting, her emotional needs were taken care of anytime that someone reassured her that she was doing well and anytime that she felt included in the classroom. Her spiritual needs were taken care of at home because she and her mother took the time to make them a priority. The research subject's mother was a positive impact in the research subject's life because she taught her daughter how to pursue her goals and live up to her potential. The research subject has been in a wheelchair, without the use of her legs and feet, all her life. However, she had the goal of getting her driver's permit. The family outfitted their van with hand controls, but the research subject was completely in charge of her own studying and planning for the test. She set her mind to it, and she achieved. This is a situation that should make the teacher-figure in her life (her mother in this case) sit back and smile. Her student, despite the handicaps, learned to set goals, worked hard in a way that suited her best, and achieved. A lasting, positive impact is visible here.

Educators have the power to control the environment of the classroom. The research subject's mother made the decisions while they were homeschooling that controlled the pace, the atmosphere, and the day-to-day decisions of the schooling

process. This environment, and the teachers themselves, leave an impact on students that can either be positive or negative. A positive impact is made when the educators take into consideration each and every need of their students. This includes the obvious needs of handicapped students, but also the not so obvious ones. The research subject did not have use of her legs, which is more obvious; however, her spine is compressed and she often has trouble reaching different items. This is less obvious, but can become known to a teacher when they take the time to get to know students like the research subject and learn these different needs. When these needs are known, they can be met, and effective and engaging learning practices can take place.

Limitations of Study

The research conducted for this study involved an interview with one high school student with a physical disability and her mother. For a more comprehensive examination of the personal experiences in the classroom by students with disabilities and handicaps to be done, a larger variety of students would need to be interviewed. Students across grade levels and students with different forms and degrees of disabilities and handicaps would need to be asked similar questions in order to form a more complete research study.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should be guided by an attempt to learn more from the diverse range of students that is in the inclusive classroom. Research to expand this area of study should include future interviews and direct observation experiences. Educators that are interested in truly shaping their inclusive classrooms into a room that seeks to meet the

needs of all students should use the resources that are readily available to them. These resources include books and other studies done to explain how to implement differentiated instruction in the classroom. These educators should also use direct observation to examine the effects of their teacher methods and attitudes on the students in their classrooms. Personal interviews can also be conducted with the students as well as the parents. Information such as this could greatly contribute to the research that has been done.

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Appendix A

IRB approval email:

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 19, 2016

Haley McLean
IRB Approval 2427.021916: Engaging and Inclusive Education: A Case Study

Dear Haley,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B

Consent Form:

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
2/19/16 to 2/18/17
Protocol # 2427.021916

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Honors Program Thesis

Haley McLean
Liberty University

You and your child/student are invited to be in a research study concerning the influence of the educator on a handicapped student's development as a whole student. You were selected as possible participants because you fit the criteria for the case study subject: handicapped student and involved parent for perspective. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate and allow your daughter to be in the study.

Haley McLean, a student in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the question: What impact do educators and the classroom environment they create have on the whole being development of a handicapped student? The whole being includes the spiritual, physical, emotional, and academic needs of the student. This case study will use a real-life situation in order to try and answer the question.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate and allow your child/student to be in this study, I would ask you both to do the following things:

- 1.) *Participate in an interview. This interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of reviewing the data/information. The data will remain confidential.*
- 2.) *Relate certain life experiences as related to the study.*
- 3.) *Provide any extra information as you would see necessary to know for the project.*
- 4.) *The interview process should only take a few hours.*

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 2/19/16 to 2/18/17
Protocol # 2427.021916

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are no more than the participants would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation include the benefits that society will be receiving as a result of the information coming from the case study. The field of education, educators themselves, and students with disabilities will benefit from the insight into the research subject's pursuit of education.

Compensation:

You and your child/student will not receive compensation for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All efforts will be made to respect the privacy of the participants. Interviewing will take place over the phone, in an environment in which the conversation cannot be overheard. No posts will be made on social media regarding the study. Discussion about the study and the participants will not be held between anyone not involved in the study. Names and identifiers will be left out of the writing.

All notes will be taken on a password-protected laptop. The conversations held for interview purposes will be recorded so that the information can be transcribed and reviewed. The recording will only be held long enough for me to transcribe the words. Then it will be deleted. The transcription as well as the notes will be kept for the three-year retention period as required by federal regulations. Then they will be deleted as well.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate and to allow your child/student to participate will not affect either of your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate and allow your child/student to participate, you both are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
2/19/16 to 2/18/17
Protocol # 2427.021916

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you or your child/student chooses to withdraw from the study, you should contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you or your child/student choose to withdraw, data collected will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Haley McLean. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at hmclean@liberty.edu or 843-601-0539. You may also contact the research's faculty advisor, Dr. Tracey Pritchard, at tbpritchard@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
2/19/16 to 2/18/17
Protocol # 2427.021916

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child/student to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD/STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE
UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN
ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child/student as part of his or her participation in this study.

Signature of minor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

A list of the questions that were asked of the research subject and her mother is listed below.

For the research subject:

1. How many different schools have you attended? What kind of schools were they (public, private, homeschooling)?
2. Have you ever had an IEP? If so, what were the goals of it? Do you still have it?
3. Describe the environment of the different classrooms you have been in, including any homeschool “classrooms.”
4. Did you ever feel isolated or set apart in a classroom?
5. Have you ever felt as if your disabilities have held you back? Have these feelings changed, shifted, grown?
6. What does an ideal classroom look like to you? Include characteristics that the teacher would have.
7. Who has been the most encouraging educator you have had or worked with? What set him or her apart from the others?
8. Similarly, who has caused the most discouragement? Why?
9. How important do you think it is for a student’s physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs to be met while in the classroom?
10. What does an educator need to do in order to make you feel as if you can accomplish your dreams?

For the research subject's mother:

1. What do you think are the most important needs that your daughter needs to have met in the classroom and in her pursuit of education?
2. What roles have you seen yourself take throughout your daughter's pursuit of education?
3. If you could design the best possible classroom for your daughter, what would it look like? What would the teacher be like?
4. What areas have you seen your daughter excel in/struggle in? Do you think any outside influences contributed to these?
5. With any negative experiences that your daughter has had in the classroom, what do you think could have been done to change the situation into a positive one?
6. Have you ever had to confront an educator because he or she wasn't meeting the needs of your daughter?
7. What do you think has been the best method used to teach your daughter?
8. Do you think it is important that an educator have a relationship with your daughter? Why or why not?
9. Has your daughter ever set personal goals for herself as she pursues an education?
Have her teachers helped her to reach those goals?

What do you want to see in the future for students like your daughter?

Appendix D

Interview Transcription

Me: “Alright [research subject], my first question is for you, and I want to know how many different schools you have attended and what kind of schools they were.”

Research subject: “So I did 4K private school...then 5K through 4th grade I did homeschool. And then 5th grade through 7th grade I did public school, and then I went back to homeschool after that.”

Me: “Have you ever had an IEP?”

Research subject: “Yes.”

Me: “Okay. What were the goals of it? Do you remember? Your mom can help answer this question if she remembers.”

Mother: “Her IEP mainly was to give her the accommodations in the classroom. Meaning she had to have a certain type of table her wheelchair could roll under versus a typical desk. And she also had what they call a reading resource teacher and...just because of her poor hand control it would take her longer to do her testing...Her written assignments took longer so that reading resource teacher she would go to, to allow her that extra time that she needed. And also she’s not real good in large group testing...She would kind of freak out when everyone was able to go faster than her because it took longer. So that reading resource teacher would do big testing like the achievement testing and so forth in her room so [the research subject] wasn’t under the pressure of finishing so quickly.”

Me: “Okay! Describe the environment of the different classrooms that you have been in, including your homeschool classroom.”

Research subject: “4K was very structured and very intense, and then the homeschooling from 5k to 4th grade was laid back. I could kind of go at my own pace. And then the public school that I did the different classrooms kind of varied because some teachers were more strict than other ones. It kind of depended on what classes I was in... The teachers were accommodating though.”

Me: “Have you ever felt isolated or set apart in a classroom?”

Research subject: “Kind of, but the school I went to had a lot of special needs kids there so they were really good about making us a part of everything.”

Mother: “That school too Haley, I will just add in a note, because the way its set up here...different kids with particular needs go to different schools. So the physically handicapped went to [school name]...Those with hearing impairments and other things, they would go to [city] County Schools because that’s where the state specialists were. But her school that she was at, they would have like a buddy system where the good students [would be] paired up with a special needs kid to help them get from classroom to classroom when they change classes and help them do things that they could not do from within their wheelchair. So I thought that was a good program they had.”

Me: “That is a great program. I love that; that’s awesome. Okay [research subject’s mother], what do you think are the most important needs that [research subject] needed to have met in the classroom in her pursuit of education?”

Mother: “Well definitely...making her comfortable in the arrangements of where she would sit to learn...She had some classes that the teacher would not really be in tune to ‘Oh! She can’t reach her pencil box because it’s three inches longer away than her arm.’”

And then she had other teachers that were...just very in tune to knowing she may not be able to reach something. So I think just the functionality of where she sat with the desk and was she able to reach her supplies...was very crucial for her in a public school setting.”

Me: “Okay [research subject], describe to me what you think a perfect classroom would look like for you?”

Research subject: “That is a hard question! Probably be able to get up out of my chair and stretch and make sure I could reach everything, have everything on my level, easy to access.”

Me: “What would the teacher look like in a perfect classroom?”

Research subject: “A relatable one and one that would be able to pay attention to my needs like if I was to ask for something or just one that wouldn’t like ignore my disabilities and would help me out if I needed it.”

Me: “Alright. [Research subject] what or who has been the most encouraging educator that you have had or worked with?”

Research subject: “[teacher name].”

Me: “What grade was that?”

Research subject: “5th.”

Me: “What set her apart from other teachers that you have had?”

Research subject: “Well that was my first year at [school name] and that was also her first year at [school name] so we learned the system together and learned the building together and she was one of the ones that was very in tune to me and what I needed.”

Me: “Ok [mother], what role have you seen yourself take through [research subject’s] pursuit of education?”

Mother: “Wow. Well from of course the homeschooling I’ve been the teacher. I’ve spent a lot of time in that mode. And I have an elementary education degree so I was comfortable doing that. Now when she was in [school name], in those older years, I found myself with two particular classes that she had...almost re-teaching her what she had gotten at school...It was very difficult. She had one class in particular, which I believe was a history class, and that teacher told her from the get-go that it was a college-prep class and we’re talking 5th and 6th grade here...He had a rule in his class...if you fail a test or whatever [you could] take it home and redo it and you can get an 80 no matter what. So he was really kind of giving everyone an 80 to let them pass but they learned nothing in that class...[husband’s name] and I were constantly in contact with him and he was very gracious. He sent me CDs of every lecture he was giving, He even sent me CDs of the homework assignments and the answers and the tests, so that we could see how they were testing...and [husband’s name] and I couldn’t even do the homework without the CDs he sent to us. We could not come up with the correct answers. So that was very difficult, and when I found myself spending three hours on one subject, I said ‘We can go back to doing homeschool and be done in four or five hours.’ So that was what contributed to our decision to go back and do some homeschooling. That would be my only negative of that particular experience, but she had an English teacher that was kind of hard-nosed like that. He was kind of brash and kind of derogatory in some of his remarks but overall that was the only two. Now that history teacher that was so tough, he

was so accommodating, and he really wanted her to do well, and she really liked him. But the class was a monster.”

Me: “Okay [research subject], off of that a little bit...who has been the most discouraging and why?”

Research subject: “[Teacher name]. That would be my English teacher from [school name].”

Me: “Was that also 5th grade?”

Research subject: “Yeah 5th and 6th I think.”

Me: “Okay and why?”

Research subject: “Just because of, like what my mom said, some of the remarks he made, and she had to go through all this trouble of making him understand my IEP. He didn’t follow that at all, and I remember one time there was a thing on my IEP that said I couldn’t write long essays...and I brought a typed one in one day and he threw it in the trashcan just because he thought I was being lazy about it...He didn’t know I could type essays cause he didn’t pay attention to the IEP.”

Mother: “He was very difficult about that IEP...One teacher she had, in fourth grade, she went through half the year and the teacher had no idea she had an IEP.”

Me: “Alright [mother’s name], if you could design the best possible classroom for [research subject], what would it look like?”

Mother: “I would say that it would kind of resemble a Montessori room that I taught in at a local school here in our district...That was where each kid had a variety of options where they could go and sit and do their work because for [research subject], she gets

tired in her wheelchair. The way her ribcage sits on her spine, it constricts her breathing...she needs to stretch...I think in a long period of time, it would be great to have like a big fluffy pillow or like a beanbag sort of thing that the kids can get out of the seat or out of the wheelchair and stretch out with a lap desk or something...and be able to do the work comfortably. Being in that wheelchair for six hours...with not being able to move from that position is tiring...it wears her out. At home, she can...lay in her bed and do her school work and be very comfortable because she's stretched out. She's not constricted in that wheelchair. So I think that would be a huge thing to have various things...it could be a different type of chair and not a desk. Then just having everything...on the level where a person in a wheelchair could reach it. Everything would be within reach, and that individual would not have to rely on another student or teacher to hand them something."

Me: "What would the teacher of that classroom be like?"

Mother: "I would see the teacher as kind of being like laid back but in control of course, but not so uptight [with] trying to reach standards that might be put on them by the government or school district or whatever...but be willing to say 'okay, you learn better by repetition so let's try this with you...you learn better by hands-on and seeing, let's try this approach with you.' I think in an accommodating teacher that's laid back and not so set in their ways."

Me: "Okay [mother's name], what areas have you seen your daughter excel in?"

Mother: "I've really seen her excel in her ability to work independently actually. At first...in the lower years, you have to spend a lot of one-one-one time and teaching them

when you homeschool. And then when we went to public school, she learned how to fly a little bit there...She would sink or swim, which was great because she needed to learn to function outside of me...I've really seen her in the last few years in her older years of school where she's become independent. I can just do the lesson plans and she can work. If she has a problem, of course I'm here to help her...I've really seen her dig in and try to figure it out. She'll get online and google how to do something...She's just really become independent in her thinking and in her overall school work to get it done. I'd rather her be independent, so I think that's a great thing."

Me: "That's fantastic...and then from the opposite side of that, what did you see her struggle in?"

Mother: "I've seen her struggle a lot in handwriting...and still, as a senior about to graduate, just because she has poor hand strength. Her handwriting is sloppy, and it actually does look like a younger student. She had a hard time with that...On the flip side of that, she learned at an early age how to use a keyboard. She can type pretty well. And I think the other thing that she really struggled with would be like in her reading comprehension. That was a very hard thing for her just because in those early years we did reading comprehension, but when she went to public school...it wasn't one of their goals...when we went back to homeschooling, the curriculum that I used had parts of speech and all that, and in seventh grade, she found that she had never been taught what an adjective was. She didn't know what an adverb was. So we had to go back and reteach those things she should have gotten but did not...I feel like that was a big struggle because...the public school and I were not on the same goals."

Me: “Have you ever had to step out and confront an educator because he or she wasn’t meeting the needs of your daughter?”

Mother: “Yes actually we did, and that kind of goes back to that teacher that was not following the IEP.”

Me: “Was that the English teacher?”

Mother: “Yes...because there was...a modification in that IEP where she...could type her essays because of the handwriting and so forth. That was spelled out clearly. We had to address that, and he was not real accommodating at first, but we kept on, and she got that one...Then she had the history teacher we talked about. He gave a lot of notes, and she was supposed to take them from his lectures. She had a daily journal and she was supposed to take notes in that. She of course could not keep up because she couldn’t write fast enough. In the IEP, there was a clause that said any notes that were supposed to be taken in class...she was supposed to be given a typed out copy from the teacher...that she could highlight and make shorter notes on. We had to go to him a couple of times about that, but once he saw that he was extremely accommodating. Our main thing was where we had to confront them was about not following the IEP because they had to get out of their routine and do something extra that they really didn’t want to do.”

Me: “Okay [research subject], we’ll go back to you. How important do you think it is that a student’s physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs be met while in the classroom?”

Research subject: “Pretty important.”

Me: “Okay, let’s go one-by-one. So physical needs, how important do you think that is in the classroom?”

Research subject: “Extremely important [like from personal experience], just by being able to reach everything like what we talked about earlier.”

Me: “What about mental needs?”

Research subject: “Pretty important...being able to interact with other people without feeling too different if that makes sense.”

Me: “Yes that does make sense. Spiritual needs?”

Research subject: “Yeah that’s pretty important too, and I know in public school I didn’t get that cause you just kind of can’t, but in homeschooling, that’s something we’ve tried to incorporate even from a young age.”

Me: “And then emotional needs.”

Research subject: “Yeah just feeling like I’m a part of everything, and not looked down upon and feeling left out.”

Me: “[Research subject], what does a teacher need to do in order to make you feel like you can accomplish your goals and dreams?”

Research subject: “Treat me like everybody else...I’m the type of person that likes to know I’m doing stuff right...I guess be praised...telling me I’m doing a good job.”

Me: “Okay fantastic. [Mother], what do you think has been the best method used to teach [research subject]?”

Mother: “I think that for her it’s the hands-on thing...being able to do it herself rather than being lectured or being told ‘this is what you do’. It’s better to show her...work an example or to with her, and then let her do it. I think that’s the best approach for her.”

Me: “Alright. Do you think it is important that a teacher has a relationship with [research subject’s name]?”

Mother: “Oh absolutely because for one thing, we have found through the years that when people see another individual in a wheelchair, you automatically put a stereotype on them. Okay, something’s wrong or mentally they aren’t right or they’re weird...I think that a teacher having a relationship with her let’s that teacher see she’s just like every other kid. She wants to excel. She wants to do well. She’s going to have attitudes like every other kid, but she’s in a chair. Her feet and legs do not work like the other kid’s do. And I think that a teacher misses the true personalities of any student if they do not have a relationship, a one-on-one relationship with the students.”

Me: “Has your daughter ever set personal goals for herself as she pursues an education, and have her teachers helped her to meet these?”

Mother: “She has set personal goals for herself...from the homeschool standpoint, she would set daily goals... so she would say ‘Okay this week I want to do this or this week I want to do that.’ So she would set those small goals. Then as we got here in the older years...we’re not like public schools where she could do Driver’s Ed through school, but she did that alongside of her school work. That was a huge goal she set for herself, because I did absolutely nothing with that. I didn’t even give her the book. Her friend [friend’s name] gave her the book. And she read that book on her own and she says ‘I’m

ready to test.’ When I took her, she made a 100%. I didn’t even crack the book with her. So I think that was a huge goal that she set alongside of...her schoolwork. Quite honestly, I wasn’t wild about the driving because my little kid in a wheelchair driving a van made me nervous...So she is goal oriented, but her goals might be a little different than your average smaller-type goal.”

Me: “Absolutely. So [research subject], can you address the public school setting? Did you ever set personal goals there?”

Research subject: “In public school it’s kind of hard to set goals because there was deadlines, and I’ve never been good with deadlines because I feel like I’m getting under pressure, and then I get nervous.”

Me: “Okay [mother], what do you want to see in the future for students that have disabilities like [research subject]?”

Mother: “I would like to see the public schools really try to fine tune the programs that they have for the handicapped whether it be physical or mental or whatever, just to kind of mainstream them more and not set them apart because they have a chair or because they have braces on their legs or hearing problems or whatever. I’d like to see them find a way to tap into the abilities of these kids rather than focus on their physical disabilities and to have them more included in the overall educational process and not be kind of separated off in their own wing of the school.”

Me: “Fantastic. Well that’s actually all of my questions. Thank you so much...I really appreciate everything.”