

THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON EFFICACY IN GENERAL  
EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INCLUSION CLASSROOMS

by

Kelli Sheriff Jenkins

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. Federal mandates, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, guarantee that students with disabilities are included in the general education classroom. General education teachers need to be qualified to teach in an inclusive classroom, yet research overwhelmingly demonstrates that they do not feel prepared or effective. Currently, very little information exists on special education instructional coaching. Student achievement is directly impacted by teacher efficacy; therefore, the results of this study were necessary for considering strategies ensuring as many students as possible achieve at a high rate. Bandura's social cognitive theory and the central tenet of self-efficacy in that theory informed this research. This study utilized a causal-comparative design to examine the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale scores. A random sample of 137 general education teachers was surveyed through an online version of the TEIP. An independent-samples *t*-test was used to analyze the scores for overall self-efficacy as well as collaboration. The Wilcoxon test was used to analyze scores for inclusive pedagogy and classroom management because they did not follow a normal distribution. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in aggregate efficacy or the subfactors of inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, and collaboration.

*Keywords:* inclusion, self-efficacy, professional development, instructional coach, preparation, support

## Dedication

*“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” -Philippians 3:14*

First and foremost, I dedicate my work to the Lord. I would not have made it this far without Him walking beside me and guiding me. In those dark hours of wanting to stop and throw in the towel, God was there to nudge me back up.

Secondly, this dissertation is dedicated to my grandfather, Bruce McGuffin (1924-2018). He loved God, his family, and his country in that order. Until he took his last breath, he was my biggest cheerleader and could not be prouder that he had a granddaughter that would be called a doctor. In those moments of wanting to give up, I thought of this and his always timely advice, “Look up and press on!”

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Mike, and my son, Will. Without them, my life would not have the meaning it does. They are my number one fans and have sacrificed days, weeks, and memories to support my goal of finishing this degree. I hope that my son knows that the best and most important title I have is Mom. I pray he will look at this work as an example of dedication and perseverance that I have hopefully demonstrated and apply it throughout his life to succeed. There have been many obstacles through this process, but as a family, we did it! I love you!

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This work would not have been possible without the help of my parents, who have always been there throughout this journey and every other dream I have chased to guide, love, and encourage. They were there to encourage me when I did not want to continue. They were there to help with mom duties when I needed to work on “my book.”

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The manuscript that is here today would not have made it without my committee member Dr. Bailey and his keen eye. When I approached Dr. Bailey to join my committee, I was mainly seeking special education expertise. I did not realize I was getting a proofreading powerhouse! While I sometimes dreaded my work coming back to me after being sent to you for feedback, I cannot tell you what a blessing it was to have you craft it into the best possible dissertation, thank you!

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Least restrictive environment (LRE)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2004 (NCLB)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Professional Development (PD)

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. Chapter One addresses the background of the proposed study, historical overview, the theory, the problem to be investigated, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the benefits to society. Finally, the research questions are introduced, and definitions pertinent to the study are provided.

### **Background**

The integration of students with disabilities (SWD) in regular education classrooms is becoming the norm instead of the exception in public education (Connor, 2018). A review of the least restrictive environment data found a 93% increase in students with disabilities being placed in general education classrooms for 80% or more of their day (Morningstar et al., 2017). Between 2012 to 2018, SWD served with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) grew from 6.4 million to 7 million (NCES, 2018). However, this number does not tell the entire story as it does not include students who have not been identified and may never be identified. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2020) stated that 28% of students were below proficiency in math, reading, and science. Classrooms with such diverse learners pose new challenges for regular education teachers who have not had SWD training. Regular education teachers will face different learning abilities, social deficits, and behaviors in an inclusive classroom. There are 7 million students, approximately 14% (NCES, 2018), enrolled in public schools who currently have an IEP presents significant challenges to the school system. This

problem is compounded with almost a third of students who are not proficient in reading and math; general education teachers must be given the support, knowledge, and preparation to meet the needs of all students more efficiently and effectively.

Advocates for inclusion believe the value for all students yields invaluable results: shared learning opportunities, raised expectations, greater school satisfaction, and higher academic achievement (Carter et al., 2015; McMahon et al., 2016; Strogilos & Avradmidis, 2016). Ballard and Dymond (2017) found in their literature review of 10 studies that SWD increased math, vocabulary, and writing skills when included. Shogren et al. (2015) examined students' perspectives on inclusion. Students without disabilities believed inclusion was positive as it gave them a chance to build relationships and help SWD (Shogren et al., 2015). Warren et al. (2016) suggested that inclusion was not a placement but a shared ideology.

Critics of inclusion included special and general education teachers. General education teachers argued that they do not have the specialized knowledge needed to know “when to adapt the curriculum or teach something else” (Zagona et al., 2017, p. 172). Abdelhameed (2015) found that special and general education teachers did not believe inclusion could work because they lacked experience and knowledge of teaching SWD. Some critics believe that special education is a form of exclusion, as public schools still operate within a system that the individual must adapt to (Florian, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Kauffman et al. (2017) argued that “it is foolish and politically malicious to believe that all special teaching can be done most effectively in general education and general education teachers should accommodate all SWD” (p. 142). They agreed that special education needs improvement but changing the environment where it is practiced was not the answer.

## **Historical Overview**

Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act) enacted in 1975, later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, was the legislation that set the course for the inclusion of children with disabilities. Initially, the law stated that schools only had to give access to education and due process to SWD. However, each reauthorization and amendment of IDEA has increased the number of SWD in the general education classroom and the amount of time SWD spends there. IDEA also mandated that children with disabilities be educated alongside those without, unless general education classes with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Buford & Casey, 2012). IDEA stated that students who need special education need a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Full inclusion is the goal instead of a right, which is decided upon by a team that includes educators, administrators, and parents when developing IEP's (Russo, 2019).

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2004 (NCLB) placed even higher expectations on SWD than before and changed the funding of schools. Student achievement was tied to whether districts received federal funding. NCLB stated:

Academic standards must apply to all public schools and public-school students in the state, including public school and public-school students served with Title I funds, and must include the same knowledge, skills, and levels of achievement expected of all students. (United States Department of Education, n.d.)

This requirement meant that SWD would need even greater access to the general education curriculum. Only through fair and equitable access to the curriculum could these students achieve and be held accountable (Peterson, 2017). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA) was signed, which mandated that all students, except those with severe disabilities, must be assessed the same. Under ESSA, alternate assessments should be administered to no more than 1% of all students, as these are intended only for those with the most significant cognitive disabilities (Darrow, 2016). SWD participating in regular assessments must be immersed in the curriculum in the general education classroom, which happens through inclusion.

Special education services have historically been provided in a model commonly referred to as resource or pull-out. Resource is defined as any setting in the same school where SWD receives specially designed instruction as part of their regular schedule (Poon-McBrayer, 2016). Students spend portions of their day pulled from the traditional education classroom for assistance in the subject they need. The special education teacher provides this service. Research shows that for SWD to be successful in general education, instructional strategies and inclusionary practices must be implemented (Peterson, 2017). Srivastava et al. (2017) found that regular education teachers must be aware of the common difficulties of SWD and instructional strategies. Despite this knowledge, most regular education teachers do not understand how to incorporate SWD and run an effective inclusive classroom. There tends to be a knowledge gap, making general education teachers less confident in dealing with SWD.

The knowledge currently known about specific inclusionary practices and instructional strategies through research can only be put into practice by preparing and supporting teachers with teaching SWD. Rouse (2010) argued that “there have to be changes in the ways inclusion is conceptualized and a realization that it can only be achieved if all teachers are supported in the development of all aspects of knowing, doing, and believing” (p. 51). Teacher preparation and professional development opportunities need to be revamped so that general education teachers can thoroughly understand the concept of inclusion to properly implement it (Zagona et al.,

2017). Current professional development lacks the vigor needed for general education teachers to lead an inclusive classroom successfully. Young et al. (2017) suggested that appropriate educational interventions and teaching practices must be identified and provided to general education teachers.

Some researchers posit that teachers are the most influential factor in student achievement (Connor, 2018). A large body of research shows that teacher efficacy is strongly related to student outcomes (Gronqvist & Vlachos, 2016). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that teachers with higher efficacy are more effective in the classroom. Research suggests that teachers with high self-efficacy increase students' academic achievement and overall learning (Gulistan et al., 2017), echoed by a meta-analysis conducted by Kim and Seo (2018). Hanushek et al. (2019) also argued that teachers play an integral role in student achievement. Moreover, teachers with high efficacy can improve student outcomes; hence, increasing efficacy in teachers should be a priority.

Bandura's social cognitive and self-efficacy theories guided the development of this study. Albert Bandura originated the term self-efficacy. He defined it as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (1977, p. 2). Such self-beliefs influence: the kinds of choices one make, how much effort they will put forth, how long they will persevere in the face of difficulties and setbacks, their resilience and bounce-back capacity, and whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding (Bandura, 1988). General education teachers must be prepared for the diverse needs that SWD brings to the inclusive classroom. They should acquire training and experience in inclusive pedagogy (Sindelar & Kiely, 2015), behavior management (Schwab et al., 2015), and aptitude in collaborating with service providers and parents (Isbell & Szabo, 2015). Research

has shown that teachers with higher efficacy can better engage their students; thus, their students take a more pro-active approach in their learning (Agran et al., 2017; Ballard & Dymond, 2017; Cavioni et al., 2017).

Social cognitive theory focuses on observational learning and modeling. Bandura (1988) stated that the best results are achieved when three elements are present: the appropriate skills are modeled to convey essential competencies, those observing the modeling of a new skill receive guided practice, and lastly are given feedback and help to apply the new skill in a way that brings them success (p. 276). Instructional coaching (the independent variable in this study) was designed to model for teachers' ways to implement evidence-based practices in their classroom. Furthermore, this coaching assisted in locating resources for teachers to use in their classroom, giving constructive feedback, and encouraging teachers to be reflective. Instructional coaches have a deep knowledge of instructional practices, enabling them to offer more options to teachers who partner with them to meet students' needs (Knight, 2019). Bandura wrote, "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. By observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are formed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action" (1977, p. 32). Research indicates that instructional coaching has a positive impact on teachers' efficacy (Simpson, 2017).

### **Society-at-large**

The education of all students impacts society. Consensus about inclusion being beneficial is happening in the USA and across the globe (Brown, 2019). Districts around the country see an increasing amount of diversity with the unique needs of SWD (McFarland, 2019). Inclusive classrooms have been shown to benefit not only SWD but students without disabilities as well (Brown, 2019). Benefits of inclusion include peer models, friendship skills, acceptance, and

problem-solving (McFarland, 2019). Classrooms are often the first place of interaction with others who are different, thus teaching social norms. Additionally, Hymel and Katz (2019) point out that teachers “play a significant role in promoting inclusive classes by understanding the social dynamics that operate in educational contexts” (p. 331). Therefore, it is crucial to have effective teachers.

An inclusive classroom sets the stage for an inclusive society. All students will be a part of the larger society. Successful inclusion requires a teacher that is confident in their ability to work in an inclusive classroom. This study is timely, with inclusion becoming the expectation versus the exception in education. This information can assist districts with determining if it is practical to have a special education instructional coach. When teachers are more efficacious, all students learn and achieve more, strengthening communities and the world.

### **Problem Statement**

Due to IDEA and its provision that all children are entitled to FAPE in the LRE, inclusion for students with special needs has become the norm. According to IDEA and ESSA, employing an inclusive structure or environment is imperative to implementing special education laws (Spode et al., 2016). Furthermore, research reveals that all children benefit from inclusive classrooms while documenting the need for teacher preparedness (Flippin et al., 2020; Shogren et al., 2015; Szumski et al., 2017).

Research confirms that teachers’ perceptions of the training they have received in pre-service and in-service do not equip them with the self-efficacy nor preparedness they need for inclusion (McKay, 2016; Woodcock & Wolfson, 2019). It is well-documented that general education teachers lack training in effectively teaching children with special needs (Garwood & Sherman, 2015). There is little research on the types of training that can increase general

education teachers' efficacy and preparedness when teaching SWD (Zagona et al., 2017). When teachers understand SWD and how to integrate them into their classrooms, they are more likely to ensure that all students learn (Shoulders & Krei, 2016). Indeed, many experts suggested that the success of inclusion depends on the knowledge, instructional skills, attitudes, and beliefs of general education teachers toward the integration of students with disabilities (Ballard & Dymond, 2017; Russell, 2015; Shoulders & Krei, 2016).

Research also has shown that instructional coaching effectively increases teachers' efficacy in the classroom (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Instructional coaching positively impacts teacher attitudes, increases the implementation of new strategies, increases teachers' sense of efficacy, and improves student achievement (Killion, 2017). Olsen (2017) recommended researching a setting where an instructional coach is consistently in inclusive classrooms. The problem was that there was very little research that examined whether having a special education instructional coach increases teacher efficacy in an inclusive classroom.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. This study examined teacher efficacy data gathered from 137 general education teachers in middle schools in two large suburban districts in northeast Georgia. These districts were chosen due to the similarity of their demographics. The general education teachers were selected if they worked at a school that employs a special education instructional coach or a school that only uses general education instructional coaches.

The aggregate score on the Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale (Sharma et al., 2012) served as one dependent variable for this study. The three subscales on the TEIP are: (a) inclusive pedagogy, (b) classroom management, and (c) collaboration with peers and parents. The subscales also served as dependent variables. Special education instructional coaching, or the lack thereof, served as the independent variable for this study.

### **Significance of Study**

This study was significant by determining whether having access to special education instructional coaches increases general education teachers' efficacy in inclusive classrooms. Specifically, this study adds to the current literature on teacher efficacy for general education teachers in an inclusive classroom. This study also adds to the body of research on the effectiveness of instructional coaching.

Other authors have identified the need for further research. In public school settings, the inclusion of SWD is growing at rapid rates due to NCLB (Peacock, 2016). Research studies have shown that general education teachers do not feel efficacious in teaching SWD due to little training. Anglim et al. (2018) revealed that two-thirds of the primary school teachers interviewed were apprehensive and lacked confidence in teaching SWD. Anglim et al. (2018) recommended further research be done to further professional development on teaching SWD. Koh and Shin (2017) pointed out that most teacher preparation programs in the United States require only one special education introduction course. The authors pointed out that more research must be done to show what works with students with diverse needs in an inclusive classroom.

If teachers believe they can help their students learn, they are more likely to use positive instructional strategies and classroom management techniques; they also report higher levels of well-being (Zee & Koomen, 2016). As the concept of inclusion continues to be embraced in

school settings, the need for more efficient and effective (self-efficacious) teachers becomes essential to implementing inclusive practices (Miller, 2015). Inclusion for SWD has many documented benefits not only for those students but for students without disabilities as well. There is ample research on inclusive settings providing SWD and those without disabilities the opportunity to learn skills in academics, communication, social situations, and self-determination (Shogren et al., 2015).

Moore (2015) indicated that inclusion training is essential to ensure all teachers are well prepared for teaching SWD to provide rigorous and individualized instruction to their students. A gap existed in whether instructional coaching in special education increases practicing teachers' efficacy. Shoulders and Krei (2016) suggested that general education teachers and special education teachers must know:

- Attributes of students with special needs
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) and special education laws
- Procedures for assessing student needs
- Techniques for teaching and arranging instruction for individual students to be successful in teaching students with special needs.

Assistance must be provided to prepare teachers better to teach in inclusive classrooms (Garrett, 2017; Graham & Scott, 2016; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016).

### **Research Question(s)**

The research questions that guided this study were:

**RQ1:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ2:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ3:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ4:** Is there a difference in general education teachers' efficacy for collaboration in teaching in inclusive classrooms who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

### **Definitions**

1. *Classroom management* - Classroom management is the method and strategies that a teacher uses to ensure that the room is conducive to teaching and learning (Wong & Wong, 2009).
2. *Collaboration* - Collaboration is working with other teachers or peers to develop goals, solve problems, exchange best practices, assess students, and manage behavior to improve student outcomes (Quintero, 2017).
3. *General education teacher* - A general education teacher is the grade level or content area teacher of record certified to teach grade levels kindergarten through 12th grade (Wright, 2007).
4. *Inclusion* - Inclusion integrates students with disabilities in the general education classroom where the teaching and learning experience happens with their nondisabled peers (Embury & Kroeger, 2012).

5. *Inclusive pedagogy* - Inclusive pedagogy responds to individual differences between students while avoiding differentiation to the extent that it excludes specific learners from opportunities to participate, which isolates them even though they are physically present (Florian & Beaton, 2017).
6. *Individualized education plan* - An individualized education program is a legal document that details information regarding a student with a disability (Lo, 2014).
7. *Instructional coach* - The instructional coach is a collaborative partner for teachers who model evidence-based instructional practices, provide feedback, and encourage reflective thinking to build teacher capacity and professional growth (Knight, 2016).
8. *Least restrictive environment* - The least restrictive environment means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, schools districts should place SWD in the general education classroom with aids and supports along with students without disabilities in the school (Department of Education, 2016).
9. *Self-efficacy* - Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has in their capabilities to accomplish goals (Bandura, 1995).
10. *Teacher efficacy* - Teacher efficacy is the teacher's belief in their capability to organize and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).
11. *Students with disabilities* - Students who have been evaluated and found to be eligible for special education services under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

This chapter was a thorough overview of the literature related to the purpose of this study. The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. The literature review was divided into two main sections: theoretical framework and the related literature. Within the related literature section, the following topics were discussed: inclusion, history of self-efficacy construct, teacher self-efficacy, professional development, teacher preparation programs for teaching in an inclusive classroom, and instructional coaching. The literature in this review was mainly published between 2015-2021, apart from fundamental works related to the study's theoretical framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Cognitive Theory**

The theoretical framework for this study was social cognitive theory (SCT); Albert Bandura established this theory in the 1960s. SCT grew from the research of behaviorists such as B. F. Skinner, Pavlov, and Watson and their conclusions on behavior through motivation. SCT is based on the idea that people learn through the observation of others. Bandura (2008) suggested that if knowledge and skills were wrought painstakingly by trial and error without the benefit of direction modeled by others, human development would be decelerated immensely. SCT assumes that humans are not just reacting to their environment; but are proactive and self-regulating individuals that act based on beliefs that control their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Pajares, 2002). Teachers' beliefs in their effect predict their behavior and ability more than their

actual ability levels (Bandura, 1986, 1997). For example, if a general education teacher believes in their ability to teach students with disabilities (SWD) effectively, they will take the necessary steps. Beliefs are continually adapted by experiences encountered within their environment, and those experiences shape individuals' perceptions of their capabilities (Bandura, 1989).

Instructional coaching is based on a teacher observing the coach in implementing best practices in the classroom, providing this theory's relevance to this study. Instructional coaching typically encompasses an expert that works with teachers through observing, modeling, and providing feedback to facilitate new practices, change current practices, and sustain best practices (Reddy et al., 2017). According to Bandura (1977), observational learning is a function of observing and imitating the behaviors of others.

### *Self-efficacy*

In 1977, Bandura wrote and published *Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change* to introduce the concept. Bandura believed that self-efficacy was the missing component to previous theories about behavior and motivation. Self-efficacy is a significant tenet derived from SCT. Self-efficacy is related to this study because it has been established as a critical element of effective teaching (Sharma et al., 2012). A better understanding of self-efficacy can lead to greater insight into teachers' performance in an inclusive classroom. Based on SCT, a person has a preconceived notion of what they are capable of, which establishes their behavior. This is based on what a person attempts to accomplish and their exertion to achieve their aspiration (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy denotes an individual's acuity of the performance they can display in diverse circumstances, not just the individual's skills (Bandura, 1977). A person who is quite capable of performing a task but has low self-efficacy may fail, while another person who is not qualified to perform that task and has high perceived self-efficacy may

succeed (Bandura, 1986). When individuals have a higher perceived self-efficacy, they are more likely to change their behavior to succeed when faced with high-pressure or challenging circumstances (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2004), thus making it essential to understand ways to increase self-efficacy.

### ***Increases in Self-efficacy***

According to Bandura (1997), there are four sources of information that affect self-efficacy. The primary source of information that impacts self-efficacy is mastery experiences. Mastery experiences are the most potent source of increasing self-efficacy (Malinen, 2012); these experiences are where a person has had the most success (Bandura, 1997). Successful experiences increase self-efficacy beliefs, while experiences of failure lower them (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). This increase is due to mastery experiences being the most genuine affirmation for a person's success when attempting to meet a goal (Malinen et al., 2013). Bandura (2004) believed that a direct link exists between strong self-efficacy and success.

The next source is that of vicarious experiences or social modeling. These experiences come from observing those around us. When people observe others being successful, it increases their beliefs that success is possible. When the person observing is connected to the model performing the action, the more significant an impact on self-efficacy (Hoy, 2000). The third source is verbal persuasion, when a person is commended for something they have done well (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Verbal persuasion by others can convince people of their capabilities, especially if this persuasion comes from someone that an individual has trust in (Bandura, 1997). When an individual is appreciated verbally, they are more likely to try as hard as possible to achieve success when doing the same activity in the future (Bandura, 1982).

Finally, physiological and affective states provide information about how a person will judge their self-efficacy. In stressful situations, people tend to read the data coming in as an indicator that they are inept, which causes their self-efficacy to decrease (Pfitzer-Eden, 2016). The use of Bandura's self-efficacy theory to understand and increase general education teachers' efficacy related to the inclusive classroom was appropriate. A teacher's "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2) are crucial to success in the inclusive classroom.

### **Related Literature**

#### **Inclusion**

Inclusion has many definitions in the literature since the concept is not fully defined in IDEA. Inclusive teaching and learning are the methods by which "pedagogy, curricula, and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that are meaningful, relevant, and accessible to all" (Hockings, 2010, p.1). Wiggins (2012) stated that inclusion happens "when students with disabilities receive their entire academic curriculum in the general education program" (p. 7). Inclusion refers to students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in academic, extracurricular, and other school activities (Davis, 2015). Sacks (2009) characterized inclusion as "a collaborative process among students, parents, and educators which enables students with and without disabilities to learn in the same class to the greatest extent possible utilizing appropriate supports and services" (p. 79). More recently, Finkelstein et al. (2021) has defined inclusion as having three key principles:

1. The processes of increasing the participation of students in and reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures, and communities of local schools.

2. Restructuring the cultures, policies, and practices in schools to respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
3. The presence, participation, and achievement of all students are vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those categorized as having special educational needs. (p. 737)

The intent of the inclusive environment was not to diminish expectations for students academically and socially but to generate opportunities by providing access that was previously denied to a group of students (Carter et al., 2015). SWD are fully included with their general education peers when three factors are present: physical placement in the age-appropriate general education class, social interactions and relationships with peers who are not disabled, and meaningful participation in the general education curriculum (Almazan, 2009; Kirby, 2017). When placing SWD in an inclusive classroom, it is vital to understand which practices will be most effective for SWD to experience success (Fuchs et al., 2014; Hott et al., 2017). Fuchs et al. (2014) study is a great example of teachers using effective instructional practices that enable SWD to overcome deficits. These students implemented strategies when learning new concepts to assist with reading comprehension or memory deficits common in SWD. The type of intervention in Fuchs et al. (2014) study showed that SWD could be educated in the general education classroom without isolating them for one-on-one instruction with the special education teacher.

General education teachers are being tasked with including SWD of all types (e.g., intellectual, physical, emotional, behavioral) in their classroom. They are being asked to adapt, modify, and differentiate curriculum for the individual and collaborate with special education

teachers, service providers, administrators, and parents (Schwab et al., 2015). However, they have received very little training on pedagogy, collaboration, or classroom management.

An obvious disconnect is apparent between the legislation mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) for inclusion and the actual practice within schools. A study by Engelbrecht et al. (2015) revealed many complex dimensions regarding the implementation of inclusion and the challenges and opportunities to lessen that gap between policy and practice in schools. The researchers demonstrated an incompatibility between the policies, systemic issues, and teachers' interpretation of what inclusion is (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). It is important to note that the gap between theory and practice is not unique to the United States; it is occurring internationally as well. Many different international organizations have struggled to define inclusion to address this gap; however, no country has successfully implemented inclusion in their schools that fit the ideals and intentions of the concept (Haug, 2017). Haug (2017) further stated that no real relationship exists between ideals and practice, which signifies that this is not a true political priority.

### ***Historical and Legal Background***

The idea of inclusion dates to 1966, legislators added an amendment to The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This act provided grants to schools that implemented programs for SWD. The early 1970s saw two court cases that would be the impetus for change: *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*. In *PARC vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, the judge decreed that SWD should be educated with the same quality and training that students without disabilities were given. *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia* set the precedent for access to education for all students. This case established that all children

are entitled to free public education and training appropriate to their learning capacities (*Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*, 1972).

In 1975, Congress launched an investigation and found that millions of SWD were not receiving appropriate education and passed the first federal law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), also known as PL94-142. This law mandated that SWD have a right to be educated and that state and local education agencies would be held accountable for this education. Furthermore, SWD should be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The regular education classroom is considered the first place to start in determining LRE. IDEA regulations state:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removals of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment are to occur 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. (IDEA, 2004, Section 5A, p.3)

Further litigation and changing legislation evolved into the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) as amended in 2004. IDEA was meant to ensure that all SWD are provided a free and appropriate public education. This law also emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet SWD unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living (United States Department of Education – *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004*). As a result, policymakers established the concept of inclusion to provide the strategies, services, and support that SWD would need to be

successful in the LRE, which tends to be the general education classroom. IDEA does not mention inclusion or inclusive classrooms, but it is used in educational settings to structure how SWD interacts within the school setting (Almazan, 2009).

### ***Effectiveness of Inclusion***

Inclusive classrooms provide SWD with opportunities and experiences that they may not experience in a different environment. Providing students with opportunities and exposure to the general education setting is of utmost importance in developing the core skills that will help them become functioning members of society and reach their potential (Roleska et al., 2018). Some agree with Roleska's statement; however, some researchers are still not convinced and have mixed views on the effectiveness of inclusion on SWD and students without disabilities (Kirby, 2017; Schwab, 2017).

People who advocate for inclusive classrooms maintain that there are benefits for SWD and those students without disabilities. Research indicates that SWD placed in inclusive classrooms surpass their peers that are not in an inclusive setting (Oh-Young & Filler, 2015). Inclusion students have more advanced skills in reading and mathematics, have lower chances of truancy, are less likely to have behavioral problems, and are more likely to graduate than students who have not been included (Hehir et al., 2016). Hehir et al. (2016) also expanded that to students without disabilities, through inclusion, teachers and administrators can understand the strengths and weaknesses of all students when SWD are included. Researchers also found that there are social benefits for both groups with inclusive classrooms. Rather than pulling SWD away from instruction in pursuit of social outcomes, working with peers appears to engage students more fully in social activities planned by the general educator for all class members (Carter et al., 2016).

Individuals who oppose inclusive classrooms are most concerned with the achievement of students with and without disabilities. Some research shows that learning environments other than the inclusive classroom are more conducive to meeting the needs of SWD, whether it is academic or socially (Eller et al., 2015). Additionally, detractors of inclusion believe that teachers should teach SWD with specialized training in that area (Eller et al., 2015). Furthermore, research shows that separating the classrooms allows for a more disciplined environment that can meet the needs of each student on an individualized basis (Eller et al., 2015). Demirdag (2017) found that students in a non-inclusive classroom had a higher conceptual understanding ( $p < .001$ ) on a post-test compared to students in an inclusive classroom. The researcher determined that having an inclusive class with students with learning disabilities caused the teacher to spend more time with those SWD. As a result, the other students in the classroom were neglected (Demirdag, 2017). Tiwari et al. (2015) found that over half of teachers prefer only high-functioning SWD in general education classrooms believing that it will not be effective for lower-functioning SWD.

### **Teacher Efficacy**

The construct of self-efficacy has been examined in many different areas such as health (Clark et al., 2016), depression (Damush et al., 2016; McCusker et al., 2016), and phobias (Levy & Rodomsky, 2015). Research demonstrates that the concept of self-efficacy and the correlation to achievements in differing areas is important. Self-efficacy influences behavior by determining what goals and challenges individuals set for themselves and to what extent they persist in the face of difficulties and obstacles (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Self-efficacy can measure the effectiveness of instruction delivery (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Self-efficacy in the context of teaching refers to a teacher's perceived ability to guide their students to success (Shahzad &

Naureen, 2017). Teachers with a higher perceived efficacy tend to persevere even when the job becomes challenging. Teachers are more likely to demonstrate effective teaching practices (such as instruction and classroom management) that lead to higher levels of student achievement (Ninkovic & Knezevic-Florin, 2016). While many determinants affect student achievement, research indicates that the teacher is one of the most critical factors in determining student achievement (Avramidis et al., 2019). In a synthesis of 40 years of research, Zee and Koomen (2016) found that teachers with a high sense of efficacy set the tone for a high-quality classroom environment. These teachers plan lessons that advance students' abilities, making efforts to involve them in a meaningful way, and effectively managing student misbehavior. Research continually highlights the effect of teacher-perceived self-efficacy on student engagement (Boz et al., 2016; Kappor & Tomar, 2016; Ucar & Sungar, 2017). As the concept of inclusion becomes more accepted and implemented in general education classrooms, it becomes essential that teachers are effective (self-efficacious) and efficient in implementing inclusive practices (Miller, 2015).

### ***Self-efficacy in Inclusive Pedagogy***

It has been demonstrated that there is a robust correlation between teacher efficacy and instructional quality (Haj Hussein & Al-Qaryouti, 2015; Wong & Lo, 2016). Bandura (2012) maintained that a person's beliefs influence their behavior, which means that teacher efficacy will affect the types of instruction a teacher gives to students in the classroom.

Teachers with high perceived efficacy tend to establish learning methods and instructional avenues that focus on students' individual growth and knowledge (Hinton et al., 2015). Shoulders and Krei (2016) found that teachers with high perceived self-efficacy tend to be more innovative in their instruction with the hopes of having high achievement. Shoulders and

Krei (2016) determined that general education teachers do not have high efficacy when tasked with providing engaging activities to SWD. General education teachers highlight instructional strategies as their top concern when teaching SWD (Haj Hussein & Al-Quryouti, 2015; Lai et al., 2016). Yada and Savolainen (2017) found when assessing teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices; teachers had positive thoughts about interacting with SWD but had high levels of anxiety when including SWD in their classroom. Vaz et al. (2015) discovered that teachers had concerns with:

- Accommodating the individualized time demands of students with disabilities without disadvantaging other students in the classroom.
- Being apprehensive of the quality and quantity of work output of children with disabilities.
- Lacking adequate support services.
- Limited training and competence in supporting inclusive educational practice.

Kuyini et al. (2018) found that teachers had low efficacy in providing differentiated instruction which is one of the most important tasks for teachers to do in an inclusive classroom.

### ***Self-efficacy in Classroom Management***

Students in inclusive classrooms often have behaviors that are not seen in non-inclusive classrooms. SWD do not always have the same self-regulation mechanisms that students without disabilities have and must be taught. General education teachers report a feeling of failure when presented with challenging behaviors, such as outbursts and defiance, sometimes present in SWD (Hott et al., 2017). General education teachers are not used to handling these behaviors, which may, in turn, influence their efficacy. Zee et al. (2016) noted from their study that “teachers reported higher levels of efficacy toward students with high levels of prosocial behavior” (p.

1013). These researchers further determined that teachers have a lower self-efficacy when teaching students who exhibit behaviors not generally seen in a general education classroom [such as aggression, hyperactivity, and antisocial behavior] (Zee et al., 2016). In Hosford and O'Sullivan's (2016) qualitative study, teachers expressed great concern and little confidence in managing disruptive behavior as reported on the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices scale. Teachers reported feeling stressed and had lower confidence in managing SWD behaviors (Lee et al., 2019).

### ***Self-efficacy in Collaboration for Inclusion***

Teaching in an inclusive classroom often means collaborating with a special education teacher, psychologists, and other service providers. Shoulders & Krei (2016) purported that if the inclusive setting is going to be effective, there must be a high level of collaboration between special and general educators and parents. Collaboration is a form of lateral coordination that improves performance by promoting communication and a common purpose to solve problems (Pellegrino et al., 2015). General education teachers are hesitant to put into place suggestions that these providers may have. A study by Song (2016) found that general education teachers and special education teachers alike find collaboration challenging, which raises multiple concerns since collaboration is an essential requirement of inclusion.

Multiple circumstances can promote or impede collaboration. A quantitative study done by Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) suggested that teachers do find collaboration an effective practice; however, the challenges such as time constraints, ad hoc planning, and limited professional development outweigh the potential benefits. Middle school teachers found it challenging to schedule a time to plan individual lessons and align SWD individual education plans with the lessons they were teaching (Gebhardt et al., 2015). General education teachers

clamored for additional guidance, recommendation, and professional development to ensure successful collaboration (Gebhart et al., 2015). Research shows that having coinciding planning time increases the effectiveness of inclusion and increases general education teachers' self-efficacy, improving student achievement (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016).

### **Professional Development**

Professional development (PD) is defined as “facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice” (Buysse et al., 2009, p. 239). Research is clear that effective PD is imperative to school success and student achievement (Anderson & Palm, 2017; Early et al., 2017). Given the importance of PD for improving instruction, a better comprehension of PD needs to be realized to address the gaps in knowledge with SWD and inclusion classrooms (Schachter, 2015). Through a literature review, Cordingley et al. (2015) determined that pedagogy and subject knowledge are equally crucial. PD that focuses only on generic pedagogic strategies is not enough; pedagogies for specific students must be considered and studied.

PD comes in many forms and may not always be considered effective. A plethora of evidence from research shows that for it to be effective, five features should be present: content-focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, coherence, and is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined content-focused as “PD that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content supports teacher learning within teachers’ classroom contexts” (p. v). Kennedy (2017) found that PD programs focused on content knowledge successfully help teachers expose thinking. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated, “Active learning engages

teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them with an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for their students” (p. v). Niemi et al. (2016) found strong evidence that active learning impacts professional competencies in their quantitative analysis that utilized a regression analysis approach. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found PD that supports collaboration was very effective. A case study done by Strahan (2016) found that the most growth in teachers occurred when collaboration was involved, allowing teachers to comprehend the subject matter, obtain a more precise understanding of how students think and have more time to engage in collegial problem-solving. Desimone & Pak (2017) stated, “When PD is aligned with key elements such as content standards, curriculum, and daily lessons, it is more likely to be well implemented” (p. 8). Sustained duration gives teachers the time to learn, practice new strategies, and reflect. Previous research has suggested that unless teachers receive a specific dosage of PD hours or sessions, effects are unlikely (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

### ***Professional Development Policy***

The U.S. Department of Education guides states on how PD is carried out through policy and funding. Policymakers demand that educators have a certain amount of professional development through their careers. Policymakers insert their influence into the states through block grants, program-specific funding, and competitive grants. Block grants are allocated to states and school districts that automatically go into a general fund. States can apply for program-specific funds and are disbursed based on a formula. Competitive grant funds are contingent on a plan and/or student achievement or growth (Long, 2014). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) mandates that schools not performing must use 10% of the

federal funds for school-wide professional learning. Title II also allocates millions of dollars to professional learning for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

NCLB legislation brought more accountability to teachers and penalized schools if they did not make adequate yearly progress. NCLB concentrated teacher PD on increasing student test scores on state-mandated tests (Lieberman & Miller, 2014; Long, 2014). The legislation focused on ensuring teachers were highly qualified. NCLB defines a highly qualified teacher as one who has a bachelor's degree, full state licensure, and proven knowledge in each subject that they engage. PD was defined under NCLB as:

High quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom; and are sustained (not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. (Title IX, Section 9101, p. 34)

Virtually every teaching contract today requires PD, and teachers must participate in PD every year (Kennedy, 2016). Additionally, districts must develop school improvement plans with detailed PD policies. The most recent development in policy was the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), with the adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). With the adoption of CCSS, professional development was focused on teachers learning how to implement the standards. Additionally, states were relieved of NCLB waiver agreements; the authority was given to states to develop their own plans to support education.

### ***Professional Development in Georgia***

According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC), "Professional learning must be job-embedded, done continuously, and done while working with colleagues in a professional learning community" (Professional Learning Guideline, 2019, p. 4). The GAPSC

uses the organization Learning Forward for guidance to districts on how to develop professional development. The GAPSC also provides a link to activities and resources for professional development. According to Georgia's ESSA plan (updated in late 2019), the GA Department of Education will “continually develop, refine, and enhance all professional learning resources to meet the needs of educators, promote sustainability, and increase the fidelity of implementation” (p. 88). With the exception that schools must provide professional learning communities to teachers with the standards developed by Learning Forward, there was no information on how Georgia would enhance professional development.

### ***Professional Development Going Forward***

Despite the requirement for teacher PD, there is not a standard policy of what constitutes effective PD. PD continues to be delivered in one-day workshops or a quick sit and get. An analysis done by Kennedy (2016) found that most of the 28 studies he reviewed focused on the topic, learning activity, or program duration. He stated:

Foundations and federal agencies spend large sums on the design and implementation of PD programs. Yet despite the widespread agreement about its importance, there is little consensus about how PD works, that is, what happens in PD, how it fosters teacher learning, and how it is expected to alter teacher practice. (p. 945)

Quality PD is one way to ensure teachers have the skills they need to meet the accountability requirements of ESSA. Research supports that for professional development to be effective, there must be more than a single activity for teachers to acquire the skill and apply the skill to their practice (State et al., 2019). There is agreement that a sophisticated form of teaching is needed for learners in the 21st century, which means there must be opportunities for teachers to learn these forms and refine them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Policy and policymakers play a

paramount role in ensuring that professional development takes place but must adopt standards to ensure effectiveness. Lawmakers could manage PD more efficiently by implementing guidance on the design and evaluation of the PD programs, thereby setting a gold level standard of professional development as evidenced through research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The quality of teacher PD has become an increasingly prominent educational issue as teachers face growing scrutiny and pressure to help students achieve at higher levels (Margolis et al., 2016).

### ***Professional Development on Inclusion***

While inclusion is widely practiced in schools today, general education teachers have low efficacy when teaching SWD and a perceived lack of preparedness when teaching students with special needs. Many experts suggest that the success of inclusion depends on the knowledge, instructional skills, and attitudes and beliefs of general education teachers toward the integration of SWD (Russell, 2015). Schools are lacking in providing effective PD in special education and inclusion. There is a solid need to institute and strengthen the education component in professional development programs in schools (Russell, 2015). Traditional approaches to teachers' PD may not lead to productive changes due to teachers' beliefs towards inclusive education. However, PD courses can reinforce the advantages of inclusive education, especially to SWD, and assist with including these students into "mainstream" classrooms (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). There have been attempts to give teachers an understanding of how to teach in an inclusive setting, unfortunately, much of this has been done in short training seminars or workshops. According to Aguilar (2013), "This kind of PD by itself, which just about every teacher has experienced, rarely results in a significant change in teacher practice and rarely results in increased learning for children" (p. 7). PD that is delivered via a sit and get is rarely effective in raising teacher efficacy. In a study by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009), these

types of experiences in a large group setting did not effectively increase teacher efficacy to implement new instructional strategies. Haegele et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine if a one-day PD workshop can change physical education teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy towards inclusion. The results showed that the teachers were undecided about inclusion and needed additional training to teach SWD effectively.

There have been studies on PD for general education teachers around more comprehensive inclusion, such as those that offer specialized training and last for more than one day, but research is sparse. Coelho et al. (2017) found that general education teachers who had specialized training for teaching SWD during their career had more positive attitudes than teachers who did not have that training. In a one-week training course for general education teachers on teaching students with SWD, Chao et al. (2017) found that the course significantly impacted teacher efficacy for inclusive education. Moreover, the self-efficacy levels in teaching, learning, and classroom management improved significantly following the training. Rakap et al. (2015) conducted a study involving a web-based series of courses teaching children with autism with general education teachers. The researchers had participants take four courses with knowledgeable instructors, coupled with activities facilitated by instructors for over two years. The researchers reported that general education teachers' comfort level increased concerning teaching strategies with SWD.

### **Teacher Preparation Programs for Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms**

In addition to a lack of quality PD for veteran teachers, novice general education teachers are entering the classroom with a lack of training in inclusive education and low efficacy for teaching SWD. Feustel (2015) argued that education for SWD is still a major pedagogical problem. Administrators and leaders struggle with knowing precisely what supports and training

teachers need to effectively teach in the diverse general education classroom (Feustel, 2015). Typically, general education teachers have one course on SWD that highlights the most critical topics in special education. While many governments have adopted an inclusive approach in principle, many education policies have abounded as a direct outcome. However, many researchers still argue that preparing teachers to become inclusive teachers is too far behind (Forlin et al., 2015). Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) determined that less than half of the participants had training in inclusion in their education programs. Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) implied that teacher education programs are not in any hurry to develop and offer courses on teaching in an inclusive classroom, even though most classrooms now are, in fact, inclusive. Stites and Rakes (2018) demonstrated that teachers have very little understanding of what it takes to teach in an inclusive classroom, and they desire more preparation to feel prepared to teach in these settings. Stites and Rakes (2018) concluded, “The results suggest that teacher preparation programs need to provide a more coherent conceptual framework to guide the enhancement of both course and fieldwork related to inclusion and effective inclusive practices” (p. 30).

### **Instructional Coaching**

President Barack Obama introduced ESSA in 2015 to guarantee that each student was college and career ready. This legislation required more rigorous standards for students and teachers (Learning Forward, 2017). An emphasis was placed on job-embedded professional development for teachers as improving instructional practices and student outcomes remained at the forefront (Gendron, 2017). Dissatisfaction with traditional forms of PD has overwhelmingly failed to impact teachers’ classroom practices, leading the way for instructional coaching to be introduced. Instructional coaching programs were considered a best practice for PD to improve instruction and thus student achievement (Gendron, 2017). Research overwhelmingly

demonstrates that traditional forms of PD in a large group setting where an expert introduces a new teaching strategy are ineffective (Goodwin et al., 2018; Kraft et al., 2018). The professional learning community called for PD that supports teachers in practicing knowledge acquired with feedback during implementation (Demonte, 2013). Current research demonstrates that PD occurs throughout a teacher's career and is most effective over an extended period, corresponding to the individual teacher's needs (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). This practice supports the claim made by Galmhussein (2014), who pointed out that PD must be ongoing for teachers to understand how to apply the new learning.

Thurlings and den Brok (2017) carried out a meta-analysis of 51 studies completed from 2001-2013 on teacher PD, the review focused on learning outcomes. Thurlings and den Brok (2017) divulged that:

Through peer instructional coaching, teachers gained knowledge and insights, developed attitudes, and came to realize their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. They were able to change teaching practices. To a lesser extent, studies also showed student learning and behavior as well as how the school environment could be improved. (p. 571)

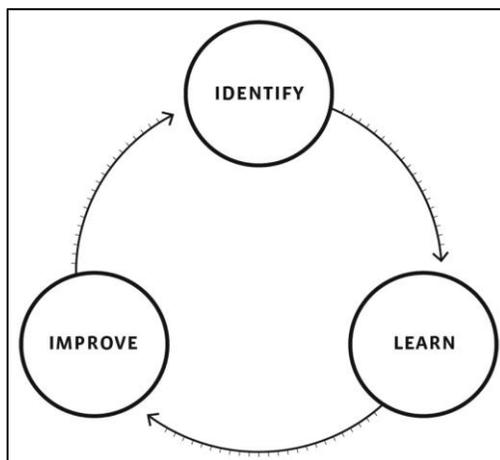
Desimone and Garet (2015) claimed that if PD was to be effective, it should be coherent, content-focused, provide time and opportunities for active learning, be extended over some time, and enable participation from all. Garet et al. (2001) revealed that less than 10% of teachers applied what was learned in the PD. Early research on coaching demonstrated that teachers who had been exposed to instructional coaching experimented with different implementation strategies more than those that had not been exposed (Harwell-Kee, 1999). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education and teacher accreditation agencies such as the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education have made it abundantly clear that evidence-based practice

is what every teacher should be demonstrating in their classrooms. However, teachers must understand how to implement these evidence-based practices in their classrooms.

Implementing an effective instructional coaching program may resolve the issues that make traditional PD ineffective. Maheady et al. (2016) stated that researchers believe that coaching that is done well might be the best intervention for teachers to bring evidence-based practices into the classroom, but it is underutilized. Maheady et al. (2016) further iterated the fact that coaching is underutilized is a problem due to the gap between research and practice. Traditional PD (such as workshops) have not been shown to impact teaching practice; coaching is the only research-based approach that has been shown to impact learning and teacher practice. Evidence has shown that coaching done as a job-embedded PD supports implementing effective teaching practices (Snyder et al., 2015). Instructional coaching is based on the belief that the coaches meet the teachers where they are at in terms of pedagogy and instructional practices and enhance their knowledge and practice, which ultimately benefits the students (Knight et al., 2015).

### ***Instructional Coaching Model***

Jim Knight and the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning have studied coaching for more than 20 years, attempting to answer, how can coaching be effective? Knight and van Nieuwerburgh (2012) stated that instructional coaching is most effective when strategies such as modeling, pre-and post-conference, and observation are used. After more than 100 studies and interviews, Knight and his colleagues devised a self-described simple but powerful way to conduct instructional coaching. The model has three elements: identify, learn, and improve, referred to as The Impact Cycle displayed in Figure 1 (Knight, 2019).

**Figure 1***The Impact Cycle*

Note: The Impact Cycle relating to instructional coaching. Reprinted from “Instructional coaching for implementing visible learning: A model for translating research into practice,” by J. Knight, 2019, *Education Sciences*, 9(2), 7. Copyright 2019 by MDPI.

The definition of instructional coaching at the root of this model is, “Instructional coaches (a) partner with teachers to (b) analyze current reality, (c) set goals, (d) identify and explain teaching strategies to hit the goals, and (e) provide support until the goals are met” (Knight, 2018, p. 7).

The first step of this model is to identify. The coach supports the teacher in recognizing what the reality is in their classroom and what the change is that they want to make to be more effective. These changes could be achievement, behavior, or attitude. Teachers and coaches can achieve this by using video, interacting with students, and reviewing data from observations (Knight, 2018). Working together, the coach and teacher set a goal to determine a strategy to use. Without identifying a clear picture of reality, teachers may set a goal that would not be as effective in their classroom or would not be excited about meeting (Knight, 2019). Knight (2018) argued that one of the essential pieces of a successful coaching relationship is empowering teachers to set their own goals. During the learn stage, “the coach helps prepare the teacher to hit

the goal by clearly describing the strategy to be implemented, often with the help of a checklist, and then provides a model of the strategy in one or more ways” (Knight, 2019, p. 12). Usually, we learn how to do something by watching others show us how to do it first. Lastly, the coach supports and gives feedback to the teacher until the goal is met. Coaches also play a significant role in the improve phase; they can encourage and give feedback as the teachers implement the strategies they learned (Knight, 2019). Knight et al. (2015) stated, “Instructional coaches who use a proven coaching cycle, can partner with teachers to set and reach improvement goals that have an unmistakable, positive impact on students’ lives” (para. 34). An accumulating body of research maintains that coaching is an effective component of professional development (King et al., 2015).

### ***Coaching in Other Disciplines***

Coaching is not a novel concept as athletes have had coaches for centuries, and singers have had voice coaches. While instructional coaching in education has gained traction over the last two decades, this was primarily based on coaching models in other disciplines (Knight, 2007). Whitmore (2017) defined coaching as “unlocking people’s potential to maximize their performance” (p. 12-13). Kurz et al. (2017) stated, “Across a wide variety of disciplines, coaching has become the universal practice for improving the professional performance of individuals and consequently, the effectiveness of their organizations” (p. 66).

Leaders in the business world unlock their employees' potential through coaching, often called executive or business coaching. Knight (2007) purported this process assist employees with identifying their goals and weaknesses, and the coach supports the employee as they work through the obstacles. Blackman et al. (2016) acknowledged while there is very little systematic empirical research on the effectiveness of business coaching, it is beginning to take academic

interest. Their review revealed that business coaching could be effective, but the evidence was confined to only participants' self-evaluations. A study done by Gan et al. (2020) found that there must be organizational support for coaching to be successful in the business world. Effective coaching manufactures quality relationships between the coach and employee; the employee should have specific characteristics such as being goal-oriented, receptive to feedback, and proactive. Wiginton and Cartwright (2020) surveyed 87 companies and determined that the coaching process provides results and produces a significant return on investment, with businesses having compelling outcomes across various areas.

Another area gaining attention in the coaching literature is life coaching. Jarosz (2016) defined life coaching as “a motivational and behavioral change approach that helps people to set and reach better goals, leading to enhanced well-being and personal functioning” (p. 34). Jarosz acknowledged a lack of congruency between approaches; there is some confusion in the industry which decreases the quality of services. Through a literature review, Jarosz (2016) summarized coaching as “an efficient long-term relationship that allows clients to maximize their potential” (p. 51). A study done by Shipgelman (2019) studied whether life coaching effectively increased the quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Shipgelman (2019) found that a life coach enhanced the quality of life and led to positive outcomes in both individuals.

### ***Instructional Coaching in Special Education***

There is very little research on instructional coaching in special education for special education teachers or regular education teachers. Research surrounding instructional coaching is most often centered on elementary students while very little focus on SWD or secondary students (Allen et al., 2015). The study found that instructional coaching for SWD almost always takes

place in the special education classroom instead of the inclusive classroom where SWD spend most of their time. Courtade et al. (2017) placed a coach with each teacher for three years utilizing bug in the ear technology; the coaching focused on increasing academic rigor for moderate to severe disabilities students. Courtade et al. (2017) determined the demand for PD designed to meet the needs of teachers of SWD is critical and that focused and dedicated support with coaches offers a powerful solution.

The literature is sparse on general education teachers receiving special education instructional coaching. Cornelius et al. (2019) conducted a study in which two general education teachers participated in 10 professional development sessions delivered monthly in addition to individualized coaching with the researcher on special education. The general educators were given a pre-and post-test to assess special education knowledge. Results indicated a significant difference between the pre-and post-test. Mean scores on the pre-test were 11.33 (SD=1.8), with a mean score of 20.5 (SD=1.05) on the post-test. In a post-intervention interview, one participant commented on the difference in expectations for special educators concerning lesson planning, delivery, and outcomes. Brock and Bearman-Diglia (2018) examined instructional coaching by studying two people with no teaching certificate, but one did hold a master's degree in education and worked with preschoolers. The participants complained of one child with severe behaviors. The researcher implemented a coaching cycle to assist the participants and eliminate the behavior. The child's challenging behaviors decreased, and the participants commented they would not have thought to manage the behavior in the way they were coached. However, this study has a considerable limitation of being limited to only one participant and the study being difficult to replicate.

### *Instructional Coaching and Teacher Efficacy*

Sweeney and Mausbach (2018) stated, “Coaching is designed to increase efficacy because it is built on the foundation of helping the teachers reach their goals for student learning” (p. 61). Simpson (2017) revealed that participants indicated their self-efficacy for teaching was 36% efficacious before instructional coaching, while 90% efficacious after working with an instructional coach. The study was conducted in a K-4 elementary building with general education coaching practices. Bengo (2016) conducted a study that examined elements of peer instructional coaching to determine if it impacted the implementation of instructional practices. Teachers interviewed during this study stated that coaching was beneficial to their growth and comfort level with implementing specific instructional strategies.

Cavazos et al. (2018) examined the effects of instructional coaching, which they described as job-embedded professional development on teachers' content knowledge and practices. Four first-grade teachers went through a coaching cycle on teaching reading to English learners below grade level. The researchers showed that it allowed time to build relationships and learn how to provide differentiated instructions, which increased efficacy for these teachers. These findings add to the literature that this approach effectively improves content knowledge, the use of evidence-based practices, and efficacy (Abu-Tineh & Sadiq, 2018; Bates & Morgan, 2018). Charner and Medrich (2017) found that 81 percent of teachers who received instructional coaching reported an increased feeling of efficacy. The teachers stated their knowledge of evidence-based practices increased, which made them better in the classroom. This coaching, in turn, increased teachers' beliefs in themselves to teach better in the classroom.

### ***Benefits of Instructional Coaching***

King et al. (2015) expressed the benefits of instructional coaching: investment in teachers, sustainability, equity, and connecting the school and district. Instructional coaches have the potential to provide diversified, targeted support to teachers on the perceived need to build self-efficacy. Instructional coaching can tie the district-wide goals in with the individual school's goals to improve student outcomes. "When employed and supported effectively, instructional coaching enhances district professional development systems by providing school and central office personnel with sustained, targeted supports to build knowledge, improve practice, and promote achievement" (King et al., 2015, p. 2). Knight et al. (2016) purported that when instructional coaches are available to teachers, they implement impressive instructional techniques to teachers while allowing them to reflect on their performance, thus contributing to well-performing schools and districts.

Desimone and Pak (2016) found that the positive effects of coaching are evident when teachers are coached to implement evidence-based instructional methods with support. The support must include multiple observations, modeling, and feedback. The study done by Hammond and Moore (2018) found that the feedback that the coaches offered was beneficial, and they were able to apply the suggestions immediately. The teachers in this study discussed incremental changes, which made it simpler to implement in the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers commented that it was a personalized approach to what they needed to improve. This approach was further supported by Spelman et al. (2016); their study demonstrated that instructional coaches could provide effective professional development. These trainings enabled teachers to implement strategies they had not previously implemented into their classrooms to meet students' needs.

As with any professional development, the intended outcome is to impact student achievement with an improvement in day-to-day teaching. Kraft and Blazar (2018) conducted a meta-analysis on 60 studies to ascertain if instructional coaching affects student achievement. The researchers hypothesized that instructional coaching affects teachers' knowledge; thus, their behavior could affect student outcomes. This study also found significant positive effects amid 43 studies with measurable results in instructional practice. Studies by Bradley (2015) and Knight (2019) supported the idea that teachers who have instructional coaching and receive the support needed to implement evidence-based practices in their classrooms are far more likely to influence student achievement.

### ***Limitations of Instructional Coaching***

School districts have a budget for professional development each year that is funded in different ways. The question for many school districts becomes whether the benefits and outcomes are a return on investment. A coaching program must be viable, designed well, and fully supported by administration and teachers to produce investment returns. Experts maintain that with the millions of dollars that school districts spend on professional development and the overwhelming evidence that traditional professional development is not producing long-lasting systemic change, the investment in coaching is well worth it (Roy, 2019).

A coaching program that is not designed well will not produce the systemic change that can influence student outcomes and teacher practice. When the coaching process is not defined, assessed, and monitored over time, the consequences do not yield what was intended. The coaching process must be focused on changing student achievement and school effectiveness (Reddy et al., 2018). Polly et al. (2015) found that the role coaches thought they signed up for looked much different from when they took the job. Administrators often require coaches to take

on many other roles throughout the day (Polly et al., 2015). Kane and Rosenquist (2018) demonstrated that coaches are often spread too thin with other duties to be effective. Their study, which spanned eight years in 20 middle schools, discovered that administrators often use coaches to assist with administrative tasks instead of coaching teachers. Kane and Rosenquist (2018) found that if the district employs a coach to visit multiple schools, they may not have enough time to build positive relationships with the teachers. On the other hand, this may isolate coaches from district goals. The strength of being based at the school and classroom level is efficient and effective for professional development. King et al. (2015) noted, "This same strength can create an array of divergent approaches to teacher learning and building content knowledge, particularly in large or decentralized systems" (p. 15).

Instructional coaching should not be the only professional development that the school system invests in. Instead, instructional coaching should be considered as only one part of a professional development plan. King et al. (2015) conceded that coaching can build links between school and district goals but must have other professional development opportunities such as "professional learning communities or district-wide frameworks" (p.5). If districts rely solely on coaching in individual schools, the risk becomes that effective teaching and learning will be in small pockets as opposed to improving both schools and districts (King et al., 2015).

As with any change, instructional coaching is no different regarding resistant teachers, which poses an additional challenge to effective implementation. While coaching in different schools will look different with various responsibilities, coaches often do not have authority over teachers. The idea that coaches are more effective in the classroom with instructional practices tends to place the perception of power on the coach (Jacobs et al., 2017). Jacobs et al. (2017) found that the resistant teachers were mainly veteran teachers who did not perceive the need for

coaching. Additionally, the teachers viewed communicating and collaborating with the coach as another task on a never-ending to-do list.

### **Summary**

Educators are increasingly faced with more and more accountability measures due to legislation such as the Every Student Succeeds Act. This act continues the protections that provide equity to SWD. Due to ESSA and IDEA, SWD are spending an increasing amount of time in inclusive classrooms. General education teachers are faced with teaching students with a diversity of needs. Research has shown that general education teachers overwhelmingly feel inadequate when teaching SWD (Lai et al., 2016). The growing number of SWD coupled with teachers' low efficacy for teaching in an inclusive classroom is problematic. Coupled with the fact that teacher preparation programs are not in a hurry to give general education teachers more training, the problem becomes alarming. The passing of each new piece of legislation sends a strong message that including SWD in the general education classroom will be the norm, with very few exceptions.

Bandura (1986) postulated that our beliefs in our abilities (self-efficacy) affect our behavior and motivation, thus our successes and failures. Research shows that when a teacher has high efficacy, they are more willing to try effective instructional practices, impacting student achievement. Teachers with low efficacy view challenges as insurmountable. Teaching in an inclusive classroom is certainly a challenge with diverse learners and behaviors requiring skills and knowledge that general education teachers do not always feel they possess. Self-efficacy is an essential construct for teaching in an inclusive classroom. The demand for understanding this construct has advanced from general teaching practices to more specialized areas of education such as teaching SWD.

Districts and schools must reevaluate how they can support SWD and the teachers who are teaching them (Knight, 2019). A better understanding of whether having a special education instructional coach on staff can increase general education teachers' self-efficacy adds to the research on instructional coaching and increasing teacher self-efficacy in an inclusive environment. This literature review has served to describe the following findings: the inclusion of SWD's in the general education classroom, teacher efficacy as an important component of teaching in an inclusive classroom, teachers are not being prepared, teachers not receiving the appropriate professional development, and an instructional coach may be an important component of professional development to support teachers in an inclusive classroom.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. This chapter detailed the methods employed by this study. The first section was the study's design, where detailed information about the research design was expressed. The second section lists the research questions that this study sought to answer, followed by the null hypothesis in the third section. This chapter's fourth and fifth sections set forth descriptions of the participants, setting, and instrumentation, respectively. The concluding section of this chapter was the data analysis section which contained detailed information on the statistical analysis used for this study.

### **Design**

This study used a causal-comparative design to determine whether a difference exists in efficacy among general education teachers are coached by a special education instructional coach versus general education teachers who are not coached by a special education instructional coach. The selected design was appropriate for this research because it explored viable relationships by looking at variances in pre-existing groups (Gall et al., 2007). Furthermore, causal-comparative research involves categorical data that involves two or more groups. The two groups in this study were general education teachers with access to an instructional coach with special education expertise and general education teachers who did not. These teachers were not assigned to the group but were naturally occurring. Causal-comparative research is also known as ex-post-facto research. It is characterized by post hoc analysis in that events have already

happened, as posited to have a cause based on previously occurring group differences (Novella, 2012).

Causal-comparative research is a type of nonexperimental investigation. Researchers seek to identify cause-and-effect relationships by forming groups of individuals in whom the independent variable is present or absent and then determining whether the groups differ on the dependent variable[s] (Gall et al., 2007). The independent variable in this study was whether general education teachers received special education instructional coaching or not, which is a natural, pre-existing variation (Gall et al., 2007).

There were four dependent variables measured in this study. The first variable was general education teachers' overall efficacy to teach in an inclusive classroom. This variable demonstrated a teacher's perception of their ability to work in a classroom with a high level of diversity and needs (Alnahdi, 2019). The next dependent variable was self-efficacy for inclusive pedagogy, the teacher's efficacy for creating a learning environment that pays attention to different backgrounds and abilities of all learners and structures instruction around those differences (Brennan et al., 2019). The third dependent variable examined was self-efficacy for classroom management in an inclusive classroom. This variable highlighted a teacher's perceived efficacy for managing all behaviors in the classroom, including extreme disruptive behavior [such as defiance, lying, verbal or physical attacks] (Beasely & Bernadowski, 2019). Finally, this study examined the dependent variable of self-efficacy for collaboration in an inclusive classroom, when members of an inclusive team were made up of other teachers, related service providers, administrators, and parents. These stakeholders must come together to work through problems and issues to give all students the best opportunities to succeed (Beasely & Bernadowski, 2019).

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ2:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ3:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ4:** Is there a difference in general education teachers' efficacy for collaboration in teaching in inclusive classrooms who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

### **Null Hypothesis**

The null hypotheses for this study are:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant difference in general education teachers' inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>0</sub>3:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and

general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' self-efficacy for collaboration who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

### **Participants and Setting**

This study setting was held at four different middle schools within two school districts in suburban Atlanta. School District A (M1 & M2) was identified as having a special education instructional coach on staff. School District B (M3 & M4) was identified as employing an instructional coach whose expertise was only in general education. The requirements for the position of special education instructional coach in district A are: A minimum of a master's degree in special education, a minimum of five years working in a co-teaching environment, and three or more years of recent classroom experience providing instruction in special education or providing educational services to students with disabilities in a general education setting.

The districts were noted in a way that protects the system and participants. The schools were selected based on similar demographics as well as to ensure enough participants. General education teachers at the respective schools have expressed an interest in understanding the most effective way to help students with disabilities (SWD). Each school has a population, with approximately 20% being identified as SWD. Table 1 contains the breakdown of student demographics in each of the schools.

**Table 1***Student Demographics*

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Student Enrollment	1053	998	1084	1011
Percentage Free/Reduced Lunch	33	38	33	35
Percentage Receiving Special Education Services	19	18	16	18
Asian	10	9	3	4
Black	17	16	13	14
Hispanic	9	10	12	11
White	58	59	70	68
Multiracial	5	5	2	2

*Note.* Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2019.

The participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of general education teachers. The participants were middle school general education teachers, which for this study was defined as Grades 6-8 teachers who currently teach all general education subjects. Demographic data was collected from the teachers who chose to participate in taking the survey. Teachers self-identified each of the demographic categories.

According to Gall et al. (2007), to achieve a statistical power of 0.7 with an alpha of 0.5 and a medium effect size assumed, there must be at least 125 participants to conduct a *t*-test. The TEIP survey was administered to 137 teachers in two separate school districts, District A employed a special education instructional coach, and District B did not. District A had 70 responses, and District B had 67 responses. The time worked, gender, degree level, race, and

years of experience are listed in Table 2, broken down by District A and District B. Most participants (47, 34.3%) have 11-20 years of experience, while the fewest participants (5, 3.6%) have more than 30 years of experience. Most participants (55, 40.1%) have a master's degree, while the fewest participants (5, 3.6%) have a doctoral degree. Most participants were White (99, 72.3%), followed by Black (26, 19%), while the least number of study participants identified themselves as Hispanic (2, 1.5%). Females made up most of the participants (114, 83.2%), and 98.5% of the participants worked full time.

**Table 2***Teacher Demographics*

	District A	District B
Work Status		
Full Time	70	67
Part-Time	1	1
Gender		
Male	13	10
Female	57	57
Degree Level		
4 Yr. Bachelor's	21	21
5 Yr. Master's	28	27
6 Yr. Specialist's	18	17
7 Yr. Doctoral	3	2
Race		
Black	16	10
White	47	56
Hispanic	1	1
Asian	3	2
Multiracial	3	2
Years of Experience		
<1	8	7
1-10	23	23
11-20	25	22
21-30	12	12
>30	2	3
Average	14	13.4

**Instrumentation**

The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices [TEIP] (Sharma et al., 2012) instrument was used to gather data for this study (see Appendix C). The purpose of the TEIP was to help understand the nature of the factors that influence the success in creating an inclusive environment (Sharma et al., 2012). The TEIP measures three subsections:

- Efficacy in using inclusive pedagogy.
- Efficacy in collaboration.
- Efficacy in dealing with disruptive behaviors with an aggregate value for overall self-efficacy for teaching in an inclusive classroom.

The TEIP has been used in several studies to measure teacher efficacy (Avramidis et al., 2019; Alnahdi, 2019; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). This instrument has strong overall content validity and reliability across multiple cultures. Each subsection has also been demonstrated to have strong content validity and reliability (Park et al., 2016).

Sharma et al. (2012) developed the instrument because an adequate tool to measure teacher efficacy in inclusive classrooms did not previously exist. There are explicit skills that teachers need to possess to be effective in an inclusive classroom. Sharma et al. (2012) determined that a scale was needed to measure teacher efficacy that focused on the environment and instructional practices instead of the individual child.

Instrument reliability was tested in multiple cultures (Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, and India) to ensure the tool was appropriate. After initial review, a 29-items scale was administered to students in teacher education programs in four countries (n=609). The scale's reliability was computed using Cronbach's alpha which resulted in the deletion of three more items, leaving 26 questions for further exploratory factor analysis. The researchers examined the eigenvalues, scree plot analysis, and parallel analysis, ultimately settling on the presence of the three factors (Scruggs, 2018).

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was used to determine which items are conceptually related to other items and the overall construct (Sharma et al., 2012). Following this analysis, the researchers deleted eight more items which became the 18-item TEIP. The three

factors accounted for 64.5% of the explained variance (Sharma et al., 2012). Six questions (5, 6, 10, 14, 15, 18) were found in factor 1 (efficacy to use inclusive pedagogy), which made up 25.45% of the variance with an alpha coefficient of 0.93. Six items (3, 4, 9, 12, 13, 16) were found in factor 2 (efficacy in collaboration), which accounted for 19.8% of the variance with an alpha coefficient of 0.85. The remaining six items (1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 17) found in factor 3 (efficacy in classroom management) made up 19% of the variance with an alpha coefficient of 0.85. In a study conducted by Park et al. (2016) that employed the TEIP, it was determined that there was a high correlation between the overall scale and the factors providing evidence of high internal consistency. Park et al. (2016) found that the overall scale's internal consistency reliability was 0.97, inclusive pedagogy was 0.92, classroom management was 0.94, and collaboration was 0.95.

Sharma et al. (2012) reported the reliability coefficient of the scale of 18 items at 0.89. The score range was 18 to 108, with a higher score indicating that the teacher has a more heightened sense of self-efficacy for teaching in an inclusive classroom. The alpha coefficients for each country were reported as well, which were 0.87 for Canada, 0.91 for Australia, 0.89 for Hong Kong, and 0.84 for India. These scores demonstrate the reliability of the scale to measure self-efficacy for teachers in inclusive classrooms across multiple cultures. Since its

development, the TEIP scale has been utilized in research studies across the globe to validate the use of the scale to measure teacher self-efficacy overall and to confirm the three sub-scale factors of inclusive instruction, behavior management, and collaboration (Park et al., 2016). The scale has recently been translated into Spanish to study a sample of pre-service teachers (Cardona-Moltó et al., 2017) and Japanese to research in-service teachers (Yada & Savolainen, 2017).

University faculty were used to evaluate the measure for content validity. The faculty all worked within the field of special education and educational psychology. The faculty came from Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, and India. Hinkin and Tracey's (1999) approach involved measuring agreement amongst experts of whether an item can measure a construct. The participants used a scale from 1 (does not measure efficacy to implement inclusion) to 5 (measures efficacy to implement inclusion). Six items were deleted because they obtained a rating of less than two, and minor changes were made to the other items (Sharma et al., (2012).

For this survey, participants rated 18 statements using a 6-point Likert scale (*1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= disagree somewhat, 4 = agree somewhat, 5 = agree, and 6= strongly agree*). Participants were required to read and follow the directions at the top of the TEIP. The participants were directed to read each statement and choose the number that best represents their opinion. The TEIP culminates in a total score that can range from 18 to 108. A higher score indicates the teacher has a higher level of teaching efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. The instrument aggregate score is produced upon completion by the software. An aggregate score for efficacy in teaching in an inclusive classroom is summed together based on the instructions of the TEIP (Sharma et al., 2012). The researcher obtained permission to use this survey. An email was sent to Umesh Sharma at [umesh.sharma@monash.edu](mailto:umesh.sharma@monash.edu) requesting permission to use the TEIP. Dr. Sharma responded to the request granting permission (see Appendix B). Table 3 shows the subfactor names in relation to the subfactor questions for the instrument.

**Table 3***Subfactor Names and the Associated Subfactor Item Questions*

Subfactor Name	Subfactor Item Questions
Inclusive Pedagogy	5,6,10,14,15,18
Classroom Management	1,2,7,8,11,17
Collaboration	3,4,9,12,13,16

**Procedures**

The following procedures were done to carry out the study. The researcher sought approval from Liberty University's IRB (see Appendix F). Once Liberty University's IRB approved the study, the researcher gained approval from School District A and School District B's superintendents (see Appendix J & M). Once permission from School District A and B (Appendix J & M) were obtained, the researcher sent an email to the respective schools in the study to gain approval from each of the school administrators (see Appendix K, L, N, & O). All materials, including the research plan, the participant consent form (see Appendix D), recruiting materials, and instrument questions were submitted for approval.

Following consent from Liberty University's IRB, the school district, and administration, the researcher forwarded the study information details. A link to the demographic survey (Appendix A) and TEIP (Appendix C) were sent to the principals at each school to forward to their staff. The study's purpose, procedure, and benefits were made clear to the participants. If the teachers chose to participate, consent was considered implied if they took the survey. The researcher was the sole collector of data; therefore, training was not needed. The participants completed the demographic questionnaire to describe the population for replication purposes (Appendix A) and the TEIP (Appendix C) via Google Forms. Participants were provided with

confidentiality assurances and the researcher's contact information should they have any questions or concerns regarding the study. When four weeks had passed, it was determined not enough participants filled out the survey to ensure statistical significance. The researcher sent the principals a second request via email to send to teachers requesting their participation in the survey. The researcher chose four weeks due to the time of data collection, it was summer, and many teachers did not check their emails.

Google Forms has a feature that allows the researcher to ensure participants that the survey is entirely anonymous. This feature permitted survey results to be completely anonymous by disassociating the email addresses from the responses. Once the data was collected, the researcher kept the data in a cloud file only accessible by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher kept a thumb drive locked in a cabinet to prevent unauthorized access to the stored data. Collected data will be stored for three years and then be destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

Following data collection, an independent samples  $t$  test was administered to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two groups on the TEIP scale for overall teacher efficacy and the subfactor of collaboration (Gall et al., 2007). The independent samples  $t$  test was the most appropriate because it is used when the means of two independent groups are analyzed. Independent samples  $t$  test is used when the independent variable is categorical, and the dependent variable is continuous data. The independent samples  $t$  test was the most appropriate for this study because it analyzed the categorical group assignment of instructional coaching and the continuous data on the TEIP (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016). The Wilcoxon test was performed on research questions two and three. This test was appropriate

because the data did not follow a normal distribution, and the Wilcoxon is the nonparametric equivalent to the  $t$  test (Gall et al., 2007).

Data were sorted and screened for unusual scores or inconsistencies using visual analysis. A box and whisker plot was used to identify extreme outliers. Testing for violation of normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was done since the sample size was more than 50. Equal variance was tested using Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance.

An independent-samples  $t$  test was conducted for null hypotheses one and four. The  $t$  test compared overall self-efficacy and collaboration in general education teachers who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who only receive general education instructional coaching. The Wilcoxon test was conducted for null hypotheses two and three. This test compared efficacy in inclusive pedagogy and classroom management in general education teachers who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who receive general education instructional coaching only, because the data did not follow a normal distribution.

The researcher used Bonferroni correction to guard against Type I errors. This correction was used because multiple tests were being applied to the same population. Given that there were four null hypotheses, the alpha level was set at  $p < .0125$ .

The effect size was calculated using Cohen's  $d$ . The effect size statistic helps judge the practical significance of a research result; however, it is only an aid to the interpretation and should not be used as the final determination of practical significance (Gall et al., 2007).

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale (Umesh, 2012) was used to investigate the research questions. This chapter reports the descriptive statistics and the statistical analysis of each of the research questions to include aggregate efficacy, inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, and collaboration. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected for each research question.

### Research Question(s)

**RQ1:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ2:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ3:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

**RQ4:** Is there a difference in general education teachers' efficacy for collaboration in teaching in inclusive classrooms who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

### Null Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in general education teachers for inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' self-efficacy for collaboration who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were obtained on each dependent variable: aggregate efficacy, efficacy for inclusive pedagogy, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for collaboration. Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 4. The statistics shown in this table indicate that there is high efficacy over all for each dependent variable.

**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics*

Dependent Variable	District	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Aggregate Efficacy	A	70	84.19	11.146
	B	67	83.18	12.672
Inclusive Pedagogy	A	70	29.76	3.081
	B	67	29.43	3.577
Classroom Management	A	70	26.87	4.619
	B	67	26.87	5.060
Collaboration	A	70	27.56	4.356
	B	67	26.88	4.996

**Results**

Analysis of research question one and four and corresponding hypotheses were done using an independent samples *t* test. The Wilcoxon test was used to analyze research questions two and three and corresponding hypotheses because they did not follow a normal distribution. A significance level of .05 was chosen for the evaluation of all statistical tests. However, the value will be adjusted to .0125 using the Bonferroni correction. This adjustment is defined as dividing the alpha level .05 by four because we performed four statistical analyses on the same population. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 28.

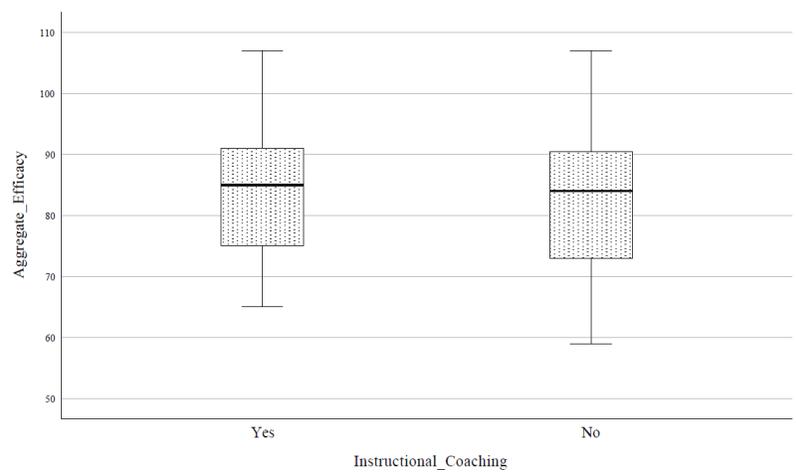
**Data Screening**

Data screening was conducted on each group's dependent variable. The researcher sorted the data on each variable and scanned for inconsistencies. No data errors or inconsistencies were

identified. Box and whiskers plots were used to detect outliers on each dependent variable. See Figures 2-5 for box and whiskers plot for aggregate efficacy, efficacy for inclusive pedagogy, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for collaboration.

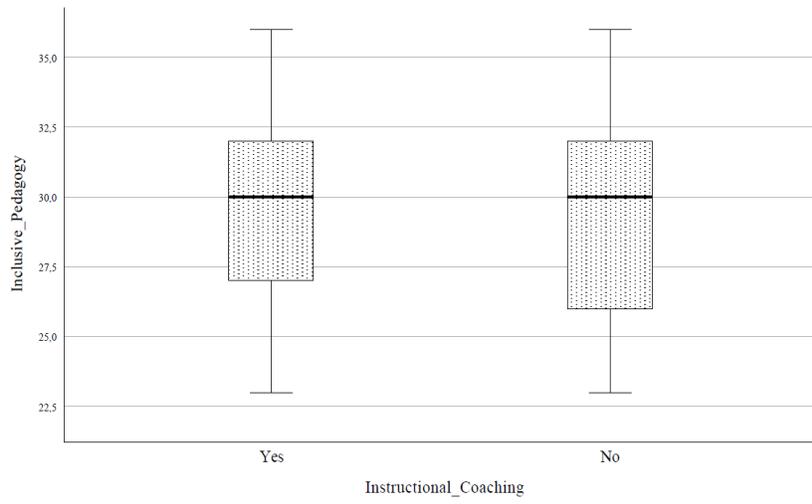
**Figure 2**

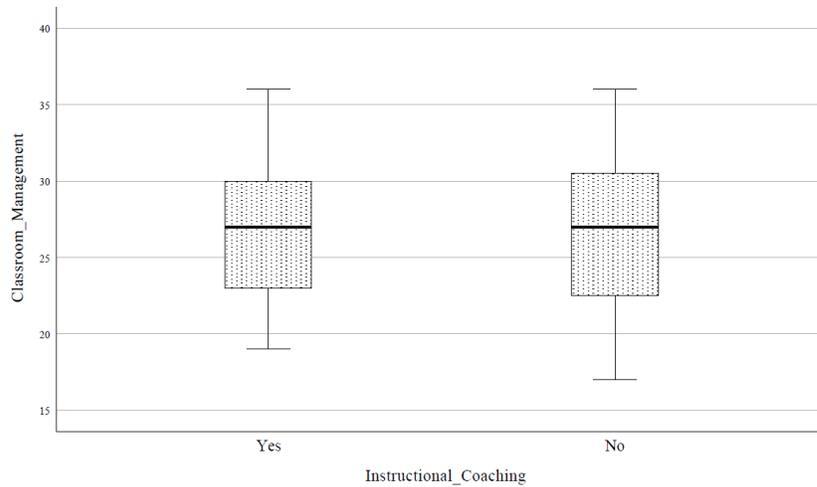
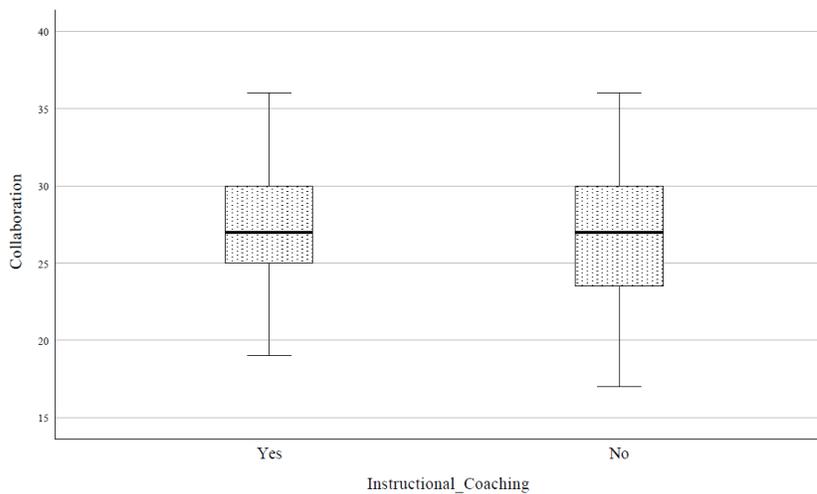
*Aggregate Efficacy*



**Figure 3**

*Inclusive Pedagogy*



**Figure 4***Classroom Management***Figure 5***Collaboration***Assumptions**

An independent sample  $t$  test was used to test null hypothesis one and four. The  $t$  test required that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met. Normality was examined using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used

because the sample size was more than 50. Violations of normality were found for the following groups: District B for efficacy for inclusive pedagogy and Districts A and B for efficacy for classroom management. See Table 5 for the Tests of Normality.

**Table 5**

*Test of Normality*

Variable	District	df	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	Sig.
Aggregate Efficacy	A	70	.084	.200
	B	67	.081	.200
Inclusive Pedagogy	A	70	.086	.200
	B	67	.110	.043
Classroom Management	A	70	.122	.011
	B	67	.120	.018
Collaboration	A	70	.097	.172
	B	67	.080	.200

The assumption of homogeneity of variance was examined using the Levene's test for aggregate efficacy and collaboration. Levene's test indicated equal variances for aggregate efficacy ( $F=1.08$ ,  $p=0.3$ ) and for collaboration ( $F=.91$ ,  $p=.34$ ).

**Results for Null Hypothesis One**

A  $t$  test was used to test the null hypothesis regarding differences in aggregate efficacy between general education teachers who work at a school with a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who work at a school that does not employ a special education instructional coach. Equal variance was assumed. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level where  $t(137) = .49$ ,  $p=.62$ ,  $d = .08$ . The effect size was small.

**Results for Null Hypothesis Two**

The data for efficacy for inclusive pedagogy did not follow a normal distribution, as seen in Table 5. Therefore, a Wilcoxon test was used to test the null hypothesis of differences in

inclusive pedagogy efficacy between general education teachers who work at a school with a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who work at a school that does not employ a special education instructional coach. The Wilcoxon test indicated that the efficacy for inclusive pedagogy scores were not significantly different between the two groups; therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, where  $z=0.55$ ,  $p=0.58$ ,  $d=.1$

### **Results for Null Hypothesis Three**

The data for efficacy for classroom management did not follow a normal distribution, as seen in Table 5. Hence, a Wilcoxon test was used to test null hypothesis three of differences in classroom management efficacy between general education teachers who work at a school with a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who work at a school that does not employ a special education instructional coach. The Wilcoxon test indicated that classroom management efficacy scores were not significantly different between the two groups; therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, where  $z=.06$ ,  $p=.95$ ,  $d=.001$ .

### **Results for Null Hypothesis Four**

A *t*-test was used to test null hypothesis four regarding differences in efficacy for collaboration between general education teachers who work at a school with a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who work at a school that does not employ a special education instructional coach. Equal variance was assumed. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level where  $t(137) = .85$ ,  $p=.4$ ,  $d = .14$ . The effect size was small.

## **Summary**

This study was conducted to determine if there was a difference in efficacy among general education teachers who work in a school with a special education instructional coach and

those who work in a school with an instructional coach whose expertise is only general education. The stated null hypotheses were as follows:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant difference between general education teachers' overall efficacy who do receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant difference in general education teachers for inclusive pedagogy efficacy who do receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>0</sub>3:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who do receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

**H<sub>0</sub>4:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' self-efficacy for collaboration who do receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

The study had a total of 137 respondents. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to assess the null hypotheses one and four. A Wilcoxon test was conducted to assess the null hypotheses 2 and 3. The *t* test results and Wilcoxon test indicated no statistically significant differences in TEIP mean scores between general education teachers who have received special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who have not received special education instructional coaching. Based on the results of the independent samples *t* test and the Wilcoxon test, the researcher failed to reject any of the four null hypotheses.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

This chapter opens with a discussion summarizing the purpose of this study, followed by the results in the context of the theoretical framework and literature review. The implications are discussed in addition to limitations and recommendations for future research. The null hypothesis for each research question failed to be rejected.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine if there was a difference in teacher efficacy between general education teachers who are coached by a special education instructional coach and general education teachers who have not been coached by a special education instructional coach. This study focused on teacher efficacy in aggregate efficacy, inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, and collaboration. The lack of evidence on effective professional development for teachers teaching in an inclusive classroom coupled with the scarcity of special education instructional coaching research prompted the need for an additional quantitative inquiry. The researcher built this study upon existing knowledge on instructional coaching and its effect on general education teachers' efficacy in an inclusive classroom. Extensive research has determined that general education teachers felt less efficacious in an inclusive classroom in certain areas, such as classroom management and collaboration (Hott et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Zee de Jong & Koomen, 2016). Research has shown that traditional forms of PD are not effective in raising teachers' efficacy (Goodwin et al., 2018; Haegele et al., 2016; Kraft et al., 2018). Some research has emerged that instructional coaching done well may raise teachers' efficacy (Maheady et al., 2016). The literature was unclear on

whether having a special education instructional coach on staff made a difference in teachers' efficacy.

The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale was used to survey 137 teachers in two districts in northeast Georgia. One district employed a special education instructional coach at the individual schools, and the other district did not. Descriptive statistics and the use of a *t*-test for two research questions and the Wilcoxon test for two questions provided an understanding of the data.

### **Research Question One**

The first research question for this study was:

**RQ1:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

The corresponding null hypothesis for this research question was:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant difference between general education teachers' aggregate efficacy who do receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

The independent sample *t* test indicated that the aggregate efficacy scores were not significantly different between the two groups of participants,  $t(137) = .49, p = .62$ , and the effect size was small ( $d = .08$ ); the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. The descriptive statistics indicated that both groups held similar perceptions of their self-efficacy. Teachers who worked in a school with a special education instructional coach had slightly higher scores, ranging from 67 to 107 ( $M = 84.2, SD = 11.1$ ) than those who did not work in a school with a special education instructional coach ranging from 59 to 107 ( $M = 83.2, SD = 12.7$ ). The high standard deviation

indicates a wide range of data from both groups of participants. The expectation was that general education teachers who had a special education instructional coach on staff would have higher efficacy due to the literature. Research has shown that instructional coaching effectively increases teachers' efficacy in the classroom (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Killion (2017) agreed that instructional coaching positively impacts teacher attitudes, increases the implementation of new strategies, increases teachers' sense of efficacy, and improves student achievement. However, this study did not demonstrate that teachers who receive special education instructional coaching had higher efficacy than those who do not.

Bandura (1997) stated that another source of self-efficacy is physiological and affective states. These are states of mind of how a person is feeling physically or emotionally. Self-efficacy levels increase when a person feels positive emotionally and physically and decrease when a person is feeling negative (Bandura, 2004). There is surfacing evidence that teacher efficacy changes throughout the year (Von der Embse & Mankin, 2020). Von der Embse and Mankin (2020) showed in their study that at the beginning of data collection (when school started), teachers felt 20% more effective and were less stressed than the last data collection in May. The researchers found that their efficacy fell at the same rate as well during this time. Von der Embse and Mankin (2020) stated that teachers had the highest efficacy and the lowest stress levels at the beginning of school. The teachers participating in this study answered the survey a couple of weeks before the start of school, increasing the likelihood that their stress levels were lower and their efficacy was higher, which may account for the high scores of both groups.

Engelbrecht (2015) revealed a disconnect in teachers' policies and interpretation of inclusion and factors that go with it, such as varied assessments and inclusive pedagogy.

Finkelstein et al. (2021) revealed that the problem still exists, that inclusion and what it means to

have an inclusive classroom still do not have an explicit definition. Teachers are not sure of what authentic, inclusive pedagogy is or what collaboration should look like. Furthermore, administrators do not have a firm grasp of inclusion as well. Taguinod (2020) found that administrators lacked special education knowledge and the preparation of delivery models. IDEA does not define inclusion in the law, confusing policymakers, administrators, and teachers (Almazan, 2009). The confusion may have played a contributing factor in how teachers interpreted the different items on the survey.

Woodcock and Hardy (2017) found a solid need to incorporate a special education component in professional development. The results of this study would suggest that both districts have adequate professional development, even if it is not through a special education instructional coach. Coelho (2017) found that general education teachers who had specialized training in special education had more positive attitudes than teachers who did not have that training. Several researchers conducted different studies and found that teachers perceived coaching beneficial to their growth and comfort level (Bengo, 2016; Simpson, 2017; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018). However, this study found no significant difference in teachers who worked with an instructional coach in a school.

### **Research Question Two**

The second research question for this study was:

**RQ2:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

The corresponding null hypothesis for this research question was:

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant difference in general education teachers for inclusive pedagogy efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

Inclusive pedagogy means responding to individual differences between students while avoiding differentiation to the extent that it excludes specific learners from opportunities to participate (Florian & Beaton, 2017). There was no significant difference between District A and District B in teacher efficacy for inclusive pedagogy. Teachers in both groups reported high efficacy for inclusive pedagogy with a mean on four out of six questions higher than five, which meant they agreed with the statement. It is important to note that on two of the items: (1) I am confident in designing learning tasks and (2) I can use a variety of assessment strategies; the mean was 4.41 for both groups. This finding suggests that teachers for both groups felt somewhat able to do these tasks, implying a lower efficacy in an inclusive classroom. Yada and Salvolainen (2017) found when assessing teacher efficacy for inclusive practices that teachers enjoyed interacting with them but became anxious when having to include them in their instruction plans. Kuyini et al. (2018) found that when tasked with differentiation tasks, teachers had low self-efficacy. The results of this study aligned with those findings suggesting that even those teachers who have access to a special education instructional coach had lower efficacy in these tasks.

### **Research Question Three**

The third research question for this study was:

**RQ3:** Is there a difference between general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

The corresponding null hypothesis for this research question was:

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' classroom management efficacy who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

Classroom management refers to the methods and strategies that a teacher uses to ensure the classroom is a suitable environment for teaching and learning (Wong & Wong, 2009). There was no statistically significant difference between District A and District B, and the effect size was small. Teachers have reported a sense of failure when dealing with challenging behaviors (Hott et al., 2017). Teachers have a low efficacy when teaching students who exhibit aggression and hyperactivity behavior (Zee et al., 2016). The low mean scores on questions 2, 7, 8, and 17 ranged from disagree somewhat to agree somewhat (3.20-4.43). These scores support the research that teachers, including those with access to a special education instruction coach, have lower efficacy when dealing with students with challenging behaviors.

The study by Courtade (2017) found that placing a coach with a teacher for three years was a powerful solution for increasing rigor for moderately disabled children. Brock and Bearman-Diglia (2018) showed that challenging behavior in preschool saw a significant decrease after a coaching cycle to help the teacher, echoing Courtade's study. Due to no significant difference between District A and District B, this finding may suggest that the instructional coaching program in District A is not following the best practices shown to be effective in the research. Spelman et al. (2016) demonstrated in their study that an instructional coaching that provides effective professional development enables teachers to implement strategies they had not tried before. The descriptive statistics in this subfactor show that teachers have not had

effective professional development for effective classroom management in an inclusive classroom.

#### **Research Question Four**

The fourth research question for this study was:

**RQ4:** Is there a difference in general education teachers' efficacy for collaboration in teaching in inclusive classrooms who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching?

The corresponding null hypothesis for this question was:

**H<sub>0</sub>4:** There is no statistically significant difference in general education teachers' self-efficacy for collaboration who receive special education instructional coaching and general education teachers who do not receive special education instructional coaching as measured by TEIP.

Collaboration is working with other teachers, service providers, parents, and others to develop goals, exchange evidence-based ideas, assess students, and manage behavior with the hopes of improving outcomes. There was no significant difference between District A and District B on efficacy for collaboration in an inclusive classroom. Song (2016) found that general education teachers and special education teachers find collaboration challenging. The results of this study have a high overall mean from both districts and thus do not corroborate with Song's findings. District A (4.17) had a slightly higher mean than District B (3.70) on question 9 (I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities). Question 16 (I am confident in informing others who know little about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities) was also slightly higher for District A (3.90) than District B (3.58). This descriptive data supports the study of Gebhart et al. (2015),

indicating that teachers need additional guidance and professional development to ensure successful collaboration with others.

### **Implications**

Research has shown that inclusion has many advocates (Carter, 2016; Hehir et al., 2016) and many detractors (Demirdag, 2017; Tiwari, 2015). The literature revealed that researchers had mixed views on the effectiveness of inclusion for students with disabilities and those without (Kirby, 2017; Schwab, 2017). However, policymakers have made it clear that students are to be in the least restrictive environment, generally considered the general education classroom. This disconnect between policy and practice has caused significant challenges for teachers in inclusive classrooms. Researchers agree that teachers lack the skills to be effective in the inclusive classroom (Hott et al., 2017; Kuyini et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2019). Finally, research has shown that traditional professional development (PD) is not effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017) but that instructional coaching is instrumental at increasing teacher efficacy (Simpson, 2017; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018).

The findings of this study implied that special education instructional coaches were not influencing teacher efficacy. There was no significant difference in aggregate efficacy or the subfactors of inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, or collaboration between District A and District B. The breakdown of the descriptive statistics highlighted that both groups had low efficacy in some aspects of teaching in an inclusive classroom. These findings demonstrate that issues such as poor behavior, differentiating tasks for SWD, and collaborative practices were not addressed by the instructional coach or professional development. There is sparse literature on special education instructional coaching, the current literature is most often centered on elementary students in special education classrooms (Allen et al., 2015). The special education

instructional coach in District A may have focused their efforts on special education classrooms instead of general education classrooms.

The study conducted by Cornelius et al. (2019) was in a general education classroom in which 10 teachers had professional development sessions in addition to individualized coaching. The researchers found a significant difference in efficacy. The results of this study implied that current instructional coaching is not being delivered in this fashion to have a substantial impact. Reddy et al. (2018) found that when coaching is not assessed and monitored over time, it may not change teacher efficacy, impacting student achievement. Kane and Rosenquist (2018) demonstrated that coaches are often spread too thin with other duties to be effective. Their study spanned eight years in 20 middle schools discovered that administrators often use coaches to assist in administrative tasks instead of coaching teachers. Kane and Rosenquist (2018) found that when a coach is employed by a district and must visit multiple schools, they may not have enough time to build positive relationships with the teachers. Finally, teachers are faced with more and more administrative tasks. Meeting with an instructional coach may feel like one more item that may never get done. Jacobs et al. (2017) found that teachers viewed communicating and collaborating with the coach as another task on a never-ending to-do list.

### **Limitations**

This study had several limitations. First, the TEIP, while having validity and reliability, had some items that could be interpreted to mean more than one thing. Without explaining its intended meaning, participants may answer it according to their perceived understanding. Furthermore, the participants' years of experience and level of education can also influence how they interpreted the questions.

A second limitation was bias, which is inevitable on a self-report, anonymous measure. Response bias leads to inaccurate data. This type of data is limited in that it can rarely be verified (Goley, 2013). Hill et al. (2019) pointed out that people may respond more positively about themselves for many different reasons. The data was collected in the summer months when most teachers are not working, leading to higher self-efficacy than when teachers are in the classroom.

A third limitation is that the knowledge of the instructional coaching model in District A was unknown. District A may not have followed a research-based model, thus decreasing the effectiveness of the instructional coach. Additionally, the professional development that District B employs was unknown but may impacted the participants' responses. If the PD program was strong and had a special education focus, this could have increased the general education teachers' efficacy for teaching in an inclusive classroom.

An additional limitation of this study was that the design was quantitative. This method does not allow for reflections and thoughts on the survey items. This study limited the responses of the participants, not allowing for in-depth descriptive data. A final limitation of this study was that it was a causal-comparative design. There were many extraneous variables that could not be eliminated due to the design, which meant the cause-and-effect relationship was only possible and not definitive. Furthermore, the independent variable was not able to be manipulated.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following are recommendations for future research after reviewing the findings from this study:

1. Conduct the same study utilizing a qualitative approach. This approach would give an in-depth understanding of why participants feel the way they do about the survey

- items. Additionally, it would allow the researcher to expand on the survey items for clarification to participants.
2. Conduct the same study at a different time of the school year to determine if efficacy levels are lower at different points in the year.
  3. Conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental design utilizing a special education instructional coach in a research-based model to determine if the instructional coach increases self-efficacy for general education teachers in an inclusive classroom.
  4. Conduct a study to determine if the district with a special education instructional coach impacts student achievement compared to a district that does not employ a special education instructional coach.
  5. Conduct a study with an instrument that includes questions of how Covid-19 affected the educational landscape regarding teacher efficacy with SWD in an inclusive classroom.

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**APPENDIX A – DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

### Demographic Information

This information is for replication purposes only.

1. How many years have you been teaching?

Less than 1

1-10

11-20

21-30

More than 30

2. What is your highest level of education?

Bachelor

Masters

Specialist

Doctorate

3. What is your race?

Asian

Black

Hispanic

Multi-racial

White

4. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

## APPENDIX B – APPROVAL TO USE TEIP SCALE

Umesh Sharma <umesh.sharma@monash.edu>  
 Sun 2/23/2020 6:31 PM  
 To:

Dear Kelli,  
 My sincere apologies for the delay in responding to you. You are most welcome to use the scale for research purposes.  
 I wish you all the very best with your studies.  
 Regards,  
 Umesh

---

Professor Umesh Sharma, Ph.D, MAPS  
 Academic Head (Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education)  
 Faculty of Education  
 Room 1.67D  
 Monash University,  
 19 Ancora Imparo Way,  
 Victoria 3800, Australia  
 Telephone: +61 3 9905 4388 Facsimile: +61 3 9905 5127  
 Website: [http://monash.edu/research/explore/en/persons/umesh-sharma\(8ee3f1a1-1b9d-492d-bac7-7149bbe45e54\).html](http://monash.edu/research/explore/en/persons/umesh-sharma(8ee3f1a1-1b9d-492d-bac7-7149bbe45e54).html)

Jenkins, Kelli  
 Fri 2/7/2020 1:46 PM  
 To: umesh.sharma@monash.edu  
 Dr. Umesh,

My name is Kelli Jenkins. I currently teach students with disabilities in the USA. I am also a doctoral student beginning my work on my dissertation at Liberty University.

My research question for my dissertation is:

Is there a difference between general education teachers' sense of self-efficacy when receiving special education instructional coaching as compared to those receiving instructional coaching that is traditional as measured by the Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012)? I am seeking permission to use the scale that you and your colleagues developed in my dissertation. Thank you for considering this. Thank you for your contributions to students with disabilities!!

Sincerely,

Kelli Jenkins

## APPENDIX C – TEIP SCALE

### Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices



This survey is designed to help understand the nature of factors influencing the success of routine classroom activities in creating an inclusive classroom environment. In an inclusive classroom, students from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and abilities learn together with necessary supports available to teachers and students.

Please select the number that best represents your opinion about each of the statements.

1- Strongly disagree 2- Disagree 3- Disagree somewhat 4- Agree somewhat 5 - Agree 6 - Strongly Agree

1. I can make my expectations clear about student behavior. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

2. I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

3. I can make parents feel comfortable coming to school. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

4. I can assist families in helping their children do well in school. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

5. I can accurately gauge student comprehension of what I have taught. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

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6. I can provide appropriate challenges for very capable students. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

7. I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behavior in the classroom before it occurs. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

8. I can control disruptive behavior in the classroom. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

9. I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

10. I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

11. I am able to get children to follow classroom rules. *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

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18. I am able to provide an alternate explanation or example when students are confused. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

12. I can collaborate with other teachers (e.g. speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

13. I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., paraprofessionals, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

14. I am confident in my ability to get students to work together in pairs or in small groups. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

15. I can use a variety of assessment strategies (e.g., portfolio assessment, modified tests, performance-based assessment, etc.) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

16. I am confident in informing others who know little about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

17. I am confident when dealing with students who are physically aggressive. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree					

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**APPENDIX D – INFORMED CONSENT**

**Title of the Project:** THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON SELF-EFFICACY IN GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INCLUSION CLASSROOMS

**Principal Investigator:** Kelli Jenkins, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

**Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a general education teacher working in an inclusive classroom in a middle school. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to determine if general education teachers who work at a school with a special education instructional coach feel as though they are more effective when teaching in inclusive classrooms as compared to general education teachers who work in a school that does not employ a special education instructional coach.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following thing:

1. Fill out the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices survey online which has 18 items
2. Fill out a demographic survey for purposes of replication.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include understanding if special education instructional coaching is a benefit to general education teachers. The results of this study may help to inform administrators and policy makers if instructional coaching is a viable option for helping general education teachers be more effective in an inclusive classroom.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from the survey is submitted anonymously.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Google Forms has a feature that allows the researcher to see the email addresses of those who have participated but does not link the email to the participants responses insuring anonymity.
- Data will be stored in a password protected cloud file and may be used in future presentations. Additionally, data will be stored on a thumb drive that will remain in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Kelli Jenkins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, DJ Mattson

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher or faculty sponsor using the information provided above

**APPENDIX F – IRB APPROVAL FROM LIBERTY UNIVERSITY****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 11, 2021

Kelli Jenkins  
D Mattson

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-851 THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON EFFICACY IN GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INCLUSION CLASSROOMS

Dear Kelli Jenkins, D Mattson:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

**APPENDIX G – SUPERINTENDENT LEVEL PERMISSION FOR DISTRICT B**

Date  
School District  
Address Line 1  
Address Line 2

Dear Superintendent:

As a current doctoral candidate in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research for partial fulfillment for the requirements of a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is and The Impact of Instructional Coaching on Self-Efficacy in General Education Teachers in Inclusion Classrooms. The purpose is to understand if general education teacher's efficacy is higher in schools that have special education instructional coaches on staff.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research with teachers at (schools) Participants will be asked to take a demographic survey so that the study can be replicated as well as well as take a short 18 question survey. This data will be helpful for districts to understand if instructional coaching in special education is a viable professional development option, which will hopefully lead to further improvements for general education teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms. Participants will be presented with informed consent prior to participating in this voluntary, anonymous study.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by emailing approval to.

Sincerely,

Kelli Jenkins

Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX H – PERMISSION FORM FOR PRINCIPALS**

Date:

Dear (Principal):

As a current doctoral candidate in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research for partial fulfillment for the requirements of a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is The Impact of Instructional Coaching on Self-Efficacy in General Education Teachers in Inclusion Classrooms. The purpose is to understand if general education teacher's self-efficacy is higher in schools that have special education instructional coaches on staff.

I have recently been granted permission through the District's Superintendents' office to conduct research with your approval.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research with teachers in your school. Participants will be asked to take a demographic survey so that the study can be replicated as well as well as take a short 18 question survey. This data will be helpful for districts to understand if instructional coaching in special education is a viable professional development option, which will hopefully lead to further improvements for general education teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms. Participants will be presented with informed consent prior to participating in this voluntary, anonymous study.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by emailing approval to

Sincerely,

Kelli Jenkins

Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX I – PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Dear Teachers:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. The purpose of my research is to understand if general education teachers' self-efficacy is higher in schools that have special education instructional coaches on staff, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a general education teacher. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take a demographic survey so that the study can be replicated as well as take a short 18 question survey, which will take no more than 10 minutes of their time. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You do not need to sign and return the consent document. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Kelli Jenkins

Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX J – DISTRICT A SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL**

Dear Mrs. Jenkins,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been approved to conduct your research study in

Please include this email when you approach our principals for their permission as proof that you have been approved by the district.

Sincerely,

**APPENDIX K – DISTRICT A PRINCIPAL APPROVAL**

June 18, 2021

Liberty University

Mrs. Kelli Jenkins

To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow this to serve as permission for Kelli Jenkins to survey the teachers in my school via email.

Sincerely,

**APPENDIX L - DISTRICT A PRINCIPAL APPROVAL**

June 21, 2021  
Liberty University  
Mrs. Kelli Jenkins

To Whom It May Concern:

Kelli Jenkins has my full support to survey teachers at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

**APPENDIX M – DISTRICT B SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL**

May 11, 2021

IRB Process  
Liberty University

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this official permission to survey teachers at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the purpose of doctoral research. Ms. Kelli Jenkins has my support to proceed with her research by working with the principals at each school to coordinate appropriate teacher survey times/plans.

Respectfully,



[REDACTED]  
Superintendent

## APPENDIX N – DISTRICT B PRINCIPAL APPROVAL

Liberty University

To Whom it may concern:

Please accept this as permission to survey teachers at [redacted] Middle School for the purpose of doctoral research. Ms. Kelli Jenkins has my support to proceed with her research by working with the teachers.

Sincerely,

[redacted signature]

Principal

[redacted name]

**APPENDIX O - DISTRICT B PRINCIPAL APPROVAL**

[REDACTED]

May 11, 2021

IRB Process

Liberty University

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this official permission to survey teachers at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] for the purpose of doctoral research. Ms. Kelli

Jenkins has my support to proceed with her research.

**APPENDIX P – APPROVAL TO USE INSTRUMENT IN MANUSCRIPT**

Umesh Sharma <umesh.sharma@monash.edu>  
Sun 10/24/2021 12:16 AM

To:

- Jenkins, Kelli

Thanks Kelli,

It's ok to modify the scale as you are suggesting.

Regards,

Umesh

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Professor Umesh Sharma, Ph.D, MAPS  
Associate Dean (Equity and Inclusion)  
Faculty of Education  
Room 1.67D  
Monash University,  
19 Ancora Imparo Way,  
Victoria 3800, Australia  
Telephone: +61 3 9905 4388 Facsimile: +61 3 9905 5127  
Website: <https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/umesh-sharma>

Jenkins, Kelli  
Fri 10/22/2021 10:38 AM

To:

- Umesh Sharma <umesh.sharma@monash.edu>

Hi Dr. Umesh,

Thank you for permission to use your instrument. I would also like to have permission to use the instrument in my manuscript. I have broken down my data by the subfactors and would like to add them for context for the reader.

Thank you for your consideration!  
Kelli Jenkins

**APPENDIX Q – PERMISSION TO PUBLISH INSTRUMENT**

Umesh Sharma  
Sun 11/14/2021 5:39 PM  
To:

Jenkins, Kelli

Dear Kelli,  
You can publish the scale in your dissertation. Good luck with your research.  
Regards,  
Umesh

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Professor Umesh Sharma, Ph.D, MAPS  
Associate Dean (Equity and Inclusion)  
Faculty of Education  
Room 1.67D  
Monash University,  
19 Ancora Imparo Way,  
Victoria 3800, Australia  
Telephone: +61 3 9905 4388 Facsimile: +61 3 9905 5127  
Website: <https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/umesh-sharma>



<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5198-9379>

**APPENDIX R – PERMISSION TO USE AND PUBLISH FIGURE 1**

Jim knight <jim@instructionalcoaching.com>  
Fri 11/5/2021 11:30 AM

Jenkins, Kelli

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[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

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Hi Kelli,

Congratulations on your research, and I'd love to learn about your results. I'm assuming you mean the identify, learn, improve figure, and you certainly have my permission to use it.

Thanks,

Jim

On Nov 5, 2021, at 10:16 AM, Jenkins, Kelli <[kjenkins37@liberty.edu](mailto:kjenkins37@liberty.edu)> wrote:

Hello Dr. Knight,

I am about to defend my dissertation which is titled: THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON EFFICACY IN GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INCLUSION CLASSROOMS. Specifically, this is about whether having a special education instructional coach on staff increases teacher efficacy.

In my dissertation literature review, I go in-depth on the impact cycle. I use the figure as well in the text. In order to publish through the library, I need your permission to publish using your figure. If you agree, you can simply reply to this email.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kelli Jenkins