

A QUALITATIVE STUDY: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW THEY ARE
PREPARED TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE LEARNING DISABILITIES IN AN
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SETTING

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

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Abstract

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of teachers in Georgia and how the pre-service training received by them prepares them for an inclusive classroom, including students with multiple learning disabilities. Educators who are teaching in an inclusive classroom are defined as having completed the required education and pre-service training to teach both students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The central question for this study was: How do teachers perceive they are prepared to teach students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting? The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design with purposeful sampling to identify participants. The setting for the study was an average-sized school district in Georgia. The data was collected through interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires. The phenomenological qualitative approach revealed teachers' underlying feelings and experiences after pre-service training when teaching in an inclusive classroom. The theory guiding the study was Bandura's self-efficacy, which relates to an individual's belief in their capacity to perform behaviors needed to reach specific goals. Understanding teachers' experiences and their outcomes can assist in understanding how they function in the classroom, particularly as it relates to students with multiple learning disabilities. The 12 participants in the study were teachers who have taught in K-12 schools for more than one year and were teaching in some capacity at the time of the study. Moustakas data analysis was used for the study. The data analysis included reviewing and examining data from individual interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires. The data showed that teachers had very little pre-service training and they directly correlated a lack of efficient pre-service training with feelings of classroom inadequacy when teaching students with MLD. Teachers also discussed that when they don't feel prepared, they feel like they are doing a disservice to the student. The results also

showed that 11 out of 12 teachers felt that what they have learned and the tools they have used in their inclusive classroom has been self-taught. At least 9 of the participants stated that much of the professional development they are required to participate in is not useful. The participants felt professional development was just something that checks a box but does not provide useful tools. Requiring additional training, in addition to higher education, would be helpful because pre-service teachers could gain practicum experience before they take on the full range of responsibilities involved with teaching students with MLDs. It would also be beneficial for teachers to receive annual certification for teaching students with MLDs, writing IEPs, and facilitating inclusive classroom instruction. The additional training would help teachers stay current on the laws, processes, and procedures when working with students who have MLDs.

Keywords: learning disabilities, pre-service training, inclusive education, phenomenology

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Classroom Management Strategies (CMS)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

Early Intervention (EI)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Full-Scale Intellectual Abilities (FSIQ)

Functional Analysis (FA)

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Function-Based Intervention (FBI)

Healthcare providers (HCPs)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

International Association of Continuing Education Units (IACET)

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Multiple Learning Disabilities (MLD)

National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP)

Neurotypical (NT)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Physical Education (PE)

Pre-service Training (PST)

Professional Units (PLUs)

Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&As)

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD)

Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT)

Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE)

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Teacher Candidates (TC)

Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA)

Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

Teacher professional learning teams (PLTs)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

University Affiliated Programs (UAPs)

Verbal Comprehension (VCI)

Working Memory (WMI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The phenomenological study examined teacher pre-service training for helping students with multiple learning disabilities (MLD), in an inclusive classroom environment. In the United States (US), it is believed that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects about 3.5 million adolescents (Calub, et al., 2019). ADHD is explained as developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that strongly influence behavioral and academic performance in the classroom (Al-Omari, et al., 2015). Due to nearly three-quarters of students with multiple disabilities (SWD) spending 80% of their time in the general classroom, teachers must try to understand how to intervene for these students (De La Paz, et al., 2023).

Students with ADHD often suffer academically because of their inattentiveness, disorganization, behavioral issues including aggression, and social impairment (Monteiro, et al., 2021). Researchers suggest that teachers are often uninformed about diagnoses and sometimes have negative attitudes about students with ADHD and other learning disabilities (Metzger & Hamilton, 2021). Educators stated that their pre-service training did not adequately train them to handle these ADHD-related behaviors and that students exhibiting ADHD characteristics are more stressful to teach. Liang and Gao (2016) explained that students with ADHD have become a challenge for teachers that is increasingly noticeable. Because teachers spend the most time with these students, they are the ones who often recognize and recommend students with behavioral issues for evaluation and treatment. The successful implementation of a program is sometimes hindered by other challenges, including a lack of teacher preparedness and contextual support for teachers, which results in a lack of confidence when handling mixed-ability classrooms. The chapter provides a background of the problem from a historical, theoretical, and

social context along with situation to self that addresses the connection between the researcher and the study.

Background

The researcher examined teacher pre-service training for helping students with multiple learning disabilities. ADHD is a medical diagnosis described by a collection of symptoms, including inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Metzger & Hamilton, 2021). In the United States, more than one in 10 students are diagnosed with ADHD, and the numbers are steadily increasing. Students with learning disabilities (LD) account for 37% of all students with IEPs and are characterized as having unexpected academic underachievement (De La Paz, et al., 2023). LD students often struggle in reading, writing, and mathematics. Often educators are uninformed about diagnoses and sometimes have a negative attitude towards students with these challenges.

While educators understand the importance of an inclusive classroom, they often face challenges, such as time constraints and limited professional development opportunities, which may hinder their ability in an inclusive classroom (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Since the start of inclusive education policies, there has been increasing concern about the labels children are assigned who exhibit learning, behavioral, and/or social-emotional issues (Zee, et al., 2020). Children with learning disabilities often face not only academic challenges but also social challenges as well (Nowicki, et al., 2018). Despite global conversations on the importance of inclusive classrooms, students with learning disabilities are vulnerable to social exclusion. Unfortunately, several risks can be associated with social exclusion. The risks can include a higher rate of attrition, illiteracy, difficulty forming healthy relationships and even being less

positively evaluated by peers. It is important to understand if teachers feel that their pre-service training programs prepare them to manage this issue.

Teachers demonstrated difficulties defining learning disorders and identifying their causes, according to Goncalves and Crenitte (2014). Many teachers state that they do not feel confident about the inclusion of special needs students in the classroom because they do not have enough experience working with ADHD and students with multiple diagnoses (Sora & Rusanescu, 2020). Teachers' lack of knowledge prevents them from effectively working with students who have learning challenges.

Many general education teachers report feeling that they are not prepared to teach students with ADHD even after their preparation coursework (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). Teachers that have completed their pre-service training have reported that the training did not prepare them to manage ADHD-related behaviors in the classroom making it more stressful for them to teach (Monteiro, et al, 2022). Although inclusive classroom training has been enforced, teachers still reported having a lack of confidence and feelings of stress (Lee, et al., 2018). A teacher's self-efficacy refers to their belief in their capability to perform specific tasks within a specific required quality in a situation. Research has suggested that there are several factors included in pre-service teacher self-efficacy beliefs in inclusive education. The factors include a teacher's prior training, experience with and motivation for inclusion, and the gender of the teacher and student. Pre-service teachers, once they graduate, are expected to start their careers as an inclusive educators, girded with the knowledge and skills to meet the many needs of all students in their classroom (Tangen & Beutel, 2016). Instead of the teacher seeing the disability as a need that should be addressed, they see the student as a problem that needs to be removed

from the classroom (Garwood & Van Loan, 2019). Although pre-service teachers were positively open to the idea of inclusion, several felt that they lacked the knowledge and skills to adequately provide fully inclusive classrooms.

Behavior rating scales are often used as a tool to measure ADHD symptoms because they are easy to administer and have been shown to be valid and reliable (Johnson, et al., 2020). Rating scales, completed by parents and teachers, evaluate behavioral symptoms in relation to a normative sample. Lee & Witruk (2017) noted that teacher accuracy was less than 50% when identifying students with learning disabilities. The accuracy in identifying the ADHD-combined type was 48.60%, the ADHD-hyperactivity and impulse type was 44.80%, the ADHD-inattentive type was 36.40%, and the non-ADHD was 51.60%. Teacher inaccuracy in identifying learning disabilities could pose a problem with misdiagnosis and cause the student not to receive the resources they need. D'Agostino, et al. (2018) postulated that screening tools should be evaluated for their accuracy when assessing students with learning needs. Assessments that overpredict learning problems will most likely lead to students receiving an intervention that they do not need. An error in unnecessary intervention, whether short or long-term, can carry negative consequences for wrongly placed or overlooked students. The success of students with LD in the classroom is based highly on the way teachers handle their behavior, so teachers must manage each student's emotional, personal, and social needs.

Increased teacher pre-service training could adequately prepare the teacher to effectively lead an integrated classroom. Teachers who have developed their knowledge, skills, and dispositions through training are better able to educate students with learning disabilities in included classrooms (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). Teachers who receive adequate pre-service

training could allow for more integrated classrooms which could prevent students with LD from going to special education classrooms. Pre-service general education teachers need to be trained to know the characteristics used to identify students with learning disabilities and how to identify learning modalities and different ways children learn.

Researchers suggested that minority children are over-diagnosed with disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders and are overrepresented in special education classes disproportionately (Slobodin & Masalha, 2020). Properly identifying predictors of ADHD can assist in improving the identification and treatment among minority children, increasing the effectiveness of interventions and lessening the service gap. The U.S. Department of Education reported that there is an overrepresentation of minority students compared to White students who receive special education services (Cartledge, et al., 2016). African American and Latino students outweigh the number of White students in special education environments. African American males, consistently, have been the main candidate identified with ADHD and recommended for special education placement. African American and Latino students are more likely than Caucasian students to expect punishment instead of treatment. For some teachers and students, there can be a level of discomfort in the classroom due to cultural differences (Wong, et al., 2016). As the number of culturally diverse students increases, so does the need for teachers with specific knowledge and skills to educate students with LD. To help prepare teachers to face the challenges of culturally diverse students, standards for accreditation of teacher preparation programs need to emphasize teacher knowledge of culturally diverse students and their academic needs, as well as teacher preparedness, field experiences, and the modeling of best practices also need to be geared towards this group of students. Although teachers do not share the same cultural background, they can gain cultural competence for minority students with LD.

Students with ADHD can maintain and process a large amount of information which results in better performance on several different intellectual tasks (Cornoldi, et al., 2013). Students with higher ADHD symptoms have a better inhibitory capacity when the workload is higher (Carreiro, et al., 2022). In a study of 117 students with ADHD, all of them had intelligence quotient (IQ) scores of 120 or higher which places them in the top 9 percent of basic intelligence for their age group (Brown, 2011). Some students were strongest in verbal comprehension, some in visual-spatial reasoning, and some equally intelligent in both. Individuals with ADHD and high IQs performed better with verbal learning and memory tests compared to ADHD individuals with average IQs (Keezer, et al, 2021). A more recent study of 676 students with ADHD and 549 elementary school students was conducted to see if there was a difference in Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT), IQ, and achievement scores (Mayes, et al., 2021). Correlations between SCT, IQ, and achievement scores (verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, working memory, processing speed, reading, math, and written expression) were nonsignificant in the samples, except for a minimal correlation with processing speed and a timed math test. Calub, et al. (2019) conducted a study of 28 boys with ADHD and 26 neurotypical (NT) boys aged 8 to 12 who were administered the WISC-IV and standardized measures of reading and math. Achievement scores in reading and math were significantly lower for the ADHD students compared to the neurotypical students. The WISC-IV scores revealed that the differences in full-scale intellectual abilities (FSIQ) resulted from lower scores on Working Memory (WMI) and Verbal Comprehension (VCI).

Historical Context

In 1975, the United States Supreme Court signed into law the right for students with learning disabilities to be in the regular classroom (Marsico, 2019). In 1975, section 504 and Title II required school districts to provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities, as required by the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In *Board of Education vs Rowley* 1982, the Supreme Court ruled that to meet the requirements of FAPE, school districts are required to provide an educational benefit for students with disabilities.

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that negatively affects 6.1 million children in the United States (Harrison, et al., 2019). Academic issues often manifest themselves as inhibited academic and behavioral performance, risk of poor grades, low standardized test scores, failing a grade, and not graduating. ADHD was first referenced in literature in 1798 by Sir Alexander Crichton, a physician born in Scotland who is noted for diagnosing what is now known as ADHD (Palmer & Finger, 2001). In 1794, as a physician at Westminster Hospital, Crichton became interested in the cause and effects of insanity and diseases of the human mind. Individuals exhibiting symptoms of what is now known as ADHD were believed to be experiencing spiritual or immoral issues. After Sir Crichton's research, he believed there was more to ADHD symptoms than just a spiritual issue and labeled it morbid attentional disorder. Sir Crichton published the first medical description of attention disorders in his three-volume medical textbook (Barkley, 2009). Sir Crichton led the way in the identification and research of ADHD.

To counteract the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities, researchers are charged with developing effective interventions for teacher practice in the classroom (Harrison,

et al., 2019). Many teachers continue to struggle with how to include students with LD in general education environments without an extreme reliance on paraprofessional support. Students with learning disabilities are four to five times more likely to have support through special education, but most of the services are provided in a general education setting. Inclusion takes place when educational barriers are removed to allow for participation, but scholars believe that teachers still struggle with inclusive classroom practices (Sagner-Tapia, 2017). Teachers establish limits to inclusion to manage diversity, stating that the limits depend on the teacher's level of understanding of the disability. Inclusive classrooms encourage participation, but it requires a change in practices that not all teachers feel prepared to make. Teachers are increasingly more challenged with meeting the instructional needs of both regular learners and students with ADHD (Hovey, et al., 2019). Meeting the educational needs of both regular learners and students with LD is a challenge for teachers because 63% of students aged 6 – 21 are represented under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but spend most of their day in a general education classroom. Although these students have ADHD, they are expected to meet the same academic standards as their peers without ADHD.

Under the Administration of George W. Bush, H.R. 1350, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) was written to strengthen the ability of the Federal Government to assist states in the education of children with disabilities (Bush, 2004). The US Federal Government, through the IDEIA of 2004 provides funds for states to provide Early Intervention (EI) special education (Barger, et al., 2021). Developmental screening is an early identification process used to pinpoint special education needs. The early identification process is understudied, but special education is impacted by several factors. For example, Healthcare providers (HCPs) vary across the board with their method of using

validated screeners, often needing to provide office staff with adequate training. HCPs may even take a wait-and-see approach even though a referral might be necessary.

In 1982 the Supreme Court ruled in the *Board of Education v. Rowley* which influenced how the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) definition was interpreted (Couvillon, et al., 2018). This ruling required that a basic opportunity be granted for access to specialized instruction and related services specifically developed for educational benefit. When developing a student's special education program, a teacher must adhere to the procedural requirements of the law and develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a student's educational benefit.

Predictors for special education include results on skills tests and the teacher's observations of the student performing below standards, having a less-than-favorable work attitude, having issues with classmates, and being overly dependent on the teacher (Smeets & Roeleveld, 2016). Cognitive impairment and delayed cognitive development have been proven to be the greatest predictors of special education referral. The process of identifying and supporting students with special education needs includes three models, a pedagogical model or knowledge goals, a social model or the student's social adaptation and adjustment to school, and a medical model or the student's health. Ultimately, the final decision of who requires special education lies in the hands of the teacher.

In 2009, a group of state officials, members of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and the Council of Chief State School Officers developed real-world learning goals that would prepare students for college and career (Burks, et al., 2015). States started reviewing the standards in 2011, and, by 2013, 45 states had adopted the Common Core

Standards. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have changed US education policy to promote excellent education as a right for each American student (Hartong, 2016). The CCSS initiative comprised the negotiation, implementation, and controlling of core skill standards for K-12 education as the guideline for regulating assessments, monitoring, and teacher training.

The CCSS provides a clear, consistent understanding of what each student is required to learn (Hartong, 2016). CCSS was born when, for the first time, the US had a common set of standards and tests so that all states could compare information and set agreed-upon benchmarks (Zancanella, 2022). Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia were the only states that did not adopt CCSS.

Starting in 1954, the federal government promoted access to special education for students with disabilities with the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Laditka, et al., 2021). This Supreme Court decision required school districts to provide proper education to students with disabilities (Marisco, 2022). The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* was originally filed by Oliver Brown of Topeka, Kansas. He filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education in Topeka because his daughter was denied access to an all-White elementary school (Yell, 2021). In his lawsuit, he challenged the Plessy separate but equal doctrine. The Board of Education argued that state officials had the legal right to determine how their students were educated, and that the separate but equal doctrine was constitutional. The court determined that because of segregation, the students were being deprived of equal protection of the laws that are guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. Chief Justice Warren argued that education was the most important function of state and local governments, and it was doubtful that any student could be

successful in life if they were denied the opportunity of an education. He also argued that education is a right that must be available to all on equal terms.

The ruling was not only a victory for civil rights, but it was also the foundation for other changes in education (Yell, 2021). Dr. Gunnar Dybwad, the executive director of the National Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Retarded Children (now the Arc) was one of the first individuals to state that the Brown v. Board of Education ruling should also be applied to persons with disabilities (Yell, 2021). It was believed that the ruling also applied to families and their children with disabilities because they, too, did not have adequate access to public education. Attorneys filed lawsuits against school districts on behalf of students with disabilities, citing the Brown v. Board of Education ruling in their complaints. Attorneys proposed before the Court that, if the Supreme Court could rule in favor of African American children receiving adequate education, then they should also not segregate students based on sex, age, or disability. The Court ruled in their favor and required the state to provide free public education to children with intellectual disabilities that was equal to the education given to general education students.

In 1963 the Developmental Disabilities Act was updated by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Public Law 106-402, 2000, and the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The 1975 IDEA was passed by Congress to neutralize discrimination against students with disabilities (Marisco, 2022). IDEA wanted to prevent students with disabilities from being either excluded from school or kept in separate classrooms where they were not provided with a meaningful education. During the time that this law was passed, there were approximately four million students with disabilities who attended public school. These four million students were thought to be receiving inappropriate education.

In addition, one million students were prevented from attending school at all. Before IDEA, the courts gave the school officials complete discretionary control over excluding students with disabilities. Parents had no control or ability to challenge the decision of the school officials because the courts placed the control in the schools' hands. Although IDEA is federally mandated and operates under the authority of the US Department of Education, each state has discretionary control over student eligibility for special education services (Nevison & Zahorodny, 2019). The 45th anniversary of IDEA was celebrated in 2020, recognizing that this legislation changed how teachers work with students and how communities include individuals with disabilities (Draper, 2021). As of 2020, approximately 6 million students aged 6 to 21 received services under the IDEA Act.

The Developmental Disabilities Act (DDA) specifically addressed the needs of people with developmental disabilities (Public Policy, 1995). Individuals with developmental disabilities include people with a severe chronic disability who are at least five years old. Eligible disabilities under DDA included mental or physical impairments or both mental and physical limitations that present before age 22, limiting at least three daily activities. Daily activities include self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Participatory Action Research Consortium researched community living, participation, and work and economic advancement to assist ADA communities to promote and increase participation of those with disabilities (Hammel, et al., 2016). The Act also led to the 1999 US Supreme Court ruling of *Olmstead v. L.C.*, which led to state and national changes in the provision of long-term care and community living support.

The DDA required full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities into the community by including them and their families, allowing them access to all services and available assistance (Public Policy, 1995). The Act provided money to State Developmental Disabilities councils to develop a system of services, support, and assistance for people with developmental disabilities along with their families. US law requires appropriate aids and services to promote success in regular education classrooms for students with disabilities (Wehmeyer, et al., 2021). Many other programs receive funds to make services available under the ADA, including protection and advocacy systems (P&As), university-affiliated programs (UAPs), and national initiatives for individuals with disabilities. The ADA ensures that individuals are granted every opportunity to participate in cultural, economic, educational, and social activities. The inclusion and benefits for individuals with developmental disabilities took a turn after cases fought in the United States Supreme Court. The US Supreme Court decided many cases over the years for individuals with developmental disabilities, but the most noteworthy case was *Olmstead v. L.C.* (Dinerstein, 2016). The case expressly addressed the rights of individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. It recognized the rights of people, who were institutionalized in facilities, and needed to live and receive specific services and supports in their community.

The Developmental Disabilities Act and Bill of Rights Act reauthorized programs that supported individuals with developmental disabilities (Clinton, 2000). The Acts were designed to allow individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their full potential through increased self-determination, independence, productivity, and inclusion in all facets of life. The Acts added an important facet, which provided new authority to provide services and activities for families of those with developmental disabilities, along with the workers who assist them. It was believed

that investing in the futures of individuals with developmental disabilities was also an important investment in the well-being of the nation. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was developed in 2006 to try to change the attitudes and policies for the inclusion and independence of individuals with disabilities (Houseworth, et al., 2019). The CRPD's purpose is to protect and monitor the rights of people with disabilities.

The Obama administration revised the No Child Left Behind Act which resulted in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (A.K., 2017). The changes included required turnaround measures for the poorest performing schools, states had to agree to evaluate their teachers based on student test scores and provide standards to get students ready for college or careers. The ESSA was signed into law by former President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015 (Congressional Digest, 2017). ESSA is an improvement to national education law and a longstanding commitment to equal opportunity in education for all students (Dennis, 2017). ESSA allows for a firm foundation to expand education and increase positive student outcomes. The previous version of this law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, represented a huge step forward for the children in our nation. The NCLB Act highlighted where students were progressing and where they needed additional assistance, regardless of race, income, residence, disability, home language, or background.

The purpose of the NCLB Act was to seal off the gap in achievement in public schools for math and reading (Adler-Greene, 2019). NCLB determined where a student was academically and how they compared to the standards (Preston, 2022). The federal government presented specific goals that all states were supposed to achieve. One goal was that 100 percent of the students were to reach 100 percent proficiency in reading and math. What came to be

known as the One-Size-Fits-All testing requirement was to identify the achievement gap between high and low-performing students. NCLB included students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, and minority group students. NCLB required schools to show documented performance improvements within different student subgroups, including racial, linguistic, poverty, and special education status (Horn, 2018). Another requirement of the NCLB Act was to employ highly qualified teachers. Teachers were required to show proficiency in core subjects, such as English and math. Newly licensed teachers were required to have a bachelor's degree, maintain full state certification, and demonstrate competency in subject matter. School districts had to present proof that they had a large number of highly qualified educators to receive Title I funding. Schools also had to inform parents that their teacher was not highly qualified, was teaching their child for four weeks or more, and that their school needed improvement.

NCLB revealed gaps in achievement among underserved students and their peers, which sparked conversations on improvements in education (Congressional Digest, 2017). Under NCLB, specific required yearly progress standards for handicapped schools that primarily served students of color, English Learners, and students with various disabilities (Brown, et al., 2019). Over time, the NCLB Act became increasingly more unworkable for schools and educators. Parents, educators, and elected officials realized that an updated law was needed to grant opportunities to all students, support schools, teachers, and principals, as well as strengthen the educational system. As they realized that the NCLB was unsustainable, the Obama Administration met with educators and families to develop a better law that would focus on clear goals of preparing all students for success in college and careers. Although some scholars believe that The ESSA undid the achievements of NCLB and shifted K-12 policymaking authority back to states and local districts, it includes provisions to allow success for students and schools

(Heise, 2017). These provisions included critical protection for disadvantaged and high-needs students, including all students being taught high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers, statewide assessments used to measure students' progress provided to educators, families, and students, and ensure accountability and action including positive change in the lowest performing schools where students are not making progress and graduation rates are low for an extended period.

In educational settings, African American, Latino, and Native American students are at the highest risk of being labeled as having a learning disability. African Americans make up approximately 17.13% of the total population of public schools, and they account for 26% of the children serviced in special education classrooms (Banks, 2017). Following the *Brown v. Board* desegregation decision, special education became an alternative to segregating African American students based on what they presumed as psychological, academic, and cultural deficits. Following the *Brown v. Board* decision, Washington D.C. public school officials designated 24% of the school's new African American students as special needs students, consequently, they came to represent 77% of the special education population.

Social Context

Foundational measurement skills are critical learning skills that children develop in different stages of development starting from early childhood to adolescence. Evaluation of these skills can provide a data-based guideline for identifying students who require more response-based intervention before starting elementary school (Gutierrez, et al., 2020). Foundational measurement skills are also used to evaluate the student's understanding and working knowledge of literacy. Strong foundational measurement skills are important not only to develop

skills at grade level but also to measure the understanding links to more complex concepts (Sutherland, et al., 2020). Lauterbach, et al. (2020) explained that for a student with ADHD to be successful, they need skilled teachers that support them to learn content and literacy skills.

Teacher preparation and training programs on teacher knowledge of the science of reading and student outcomes in reading are very impactful (Hudson, et al., 2021). One common problem that teachers noted was a lack of instruction on how to teach a given concept to special needs students. Students with LD are sent to special education classrooms partially because their needs require the teacher to understand the content and to take the time to understand how students with special needs learn and how to communicate the information (Connor & Cavendish, 2018). For teachers, when concepts are misunderstood and implemented poorly, classrooms become difficult environments for students with LD to navigate. Teachers must also understand how to teach literacy but will often resist combining literacy instruction into content classes.

Researchers found that teachers planning instruction for students with LD did not focus on individual needs, but rather group needs (Connor & Cavendish, 2018). This rarely provided accommodation for students with LD, and if accommodations were in place, teachers rarely supported the accommodation.

Adolescence can create a lot of pressure for a student, especially for a student with LD. As schoolwork increases and becomes more difficult, students with LD become more aware of and embarrassed by their learning differences (Wang & Kuo, 2019). Teachers should have positive emotional strategies for enhancing the positive feelings of adolescents with LD while utilizing inclusive classrooms and resource rooms because this can result in positive development. Teacher emotional support refers to positive attention, including care, understanding, respect, trust, and encouragement for students to help them learn how to manage

their emotions and behavior (Jin & Wang, 2019). Positive teacher-student relations with students with LD can provide these students with the support they need in the school setting.

During the global Covid-19 pandemic, all schools around the country were affected. Page, et al. (2020) explained that, as of March 28, 2020, the pandemic had caused more than 1.6 billion K-12 students in 161 countries to be out of school. That number was approximately 80% of enrolled students around the world. The impact on students with LD was greater than that of students without LD. In addition to their special education needs, they can suffer from depression and socialization decline. Isolation for students with LD is even more pronounced and places them at a greater risk socially and educationally. Teachers noted that they had a greater struggle with students with learning challenges because of their capacity and willingness to engage with technology without intensive assistance, and they had to rethink and redesign learning materials.

Students with ADHD may be at a higher risk for experiencing increased ADHD severity and related impairments (Sibley, et al., 2021). That is because the pandemic shifted their structured learning environment to a heightened demand for self-regulated learning instead of structured school routines and reduced teacher assistance and reinforcements. Changes in a student's routine can be a trigger for emotional and psychological distress for students with LD (Hall, et al., 2023). ADHD symptoms can increase stress exposure because of safety concerns, economic hardships, and increased family hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows that severity and stress exposure can cause high-stress levels in students with ADHD. Students with LD are vulnerable to serious psychiatric and behavioral health issues, such as mood disorders, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. There is a concern that the pandemic may initiate mechanisms of risks and trigger psychiatric episodes for LD

students who are vulnerable to the onset of comorbidities. Disruption to in-person learning affects the mental health of students with LD (Worrell, et al., 2023). Feelings of social isolation, resulting from COVID-19, brought about the onset of depression and suicide attempts in adolescents.

Theoretical Context

The unified theory, cognitive-energetic model, and dynamic developmental theory are a few theories associated with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. The cognitive-energetic model provides explanations of information processing in three levels: a) process, b) state, and c) management (Barry, et al., 2006). In this model, a deficit in working memory is proposed as an explanation for the lack of inhibitory control which subsequently affects executive functioning. In the information processing model, it is suggested that stimulus-response relationships may be maintained in working memory, and the ability of the individual to process working memory to monitor errors in making decisions to adjust their performance accordingly is impaired, inhibiting learning over time. Dynamic developmental theory supports the idea that defective reward processes due to the dysfunctional regulation of dopamine levels in the thalamocortical-basal ganglia circuits are the primary cause of ADHD. The dynamic developmental theory is proposed to be the most useful for understanding and interpreting behavioral and educational applied research findings on ADHD.

The research was framed around Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The theory details a person's judgement and belief to capably perform specific tasks (Myry, et al., 2021). Self-efficacy develops in the interaction between personality and environment, and people progress based on capability-related items. Bandura's self-efficacy reflects confidence in the belief of

one's competence to tackle tasks and cope with adversity in various stressful or challenging encounters. Individuals with high self-efficacy make a choice to perform more challenging tasks, set higher goals, and accomplish them, and they invest more effort and persist longer when setbacks occur to remain committed to their goals (Luszczynska, et al., 2005). Self-efficacy is said to be the teacher's ability to successfully manage professional activities. Teacher education programs should focus on preparing educators to understand their students and value their lives and cultures (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). There is often a disconnect between theory and practice with college-based US teacher education programs which fail to prepare teachers for reality and accountability. Instead of working in separate prep programs, beginning in preservice training, K-12 schools should partner to develop the prep process that will build the knowledge and skills that teachers need (Riley & Sakimura, 2018). Four building blocks to effectively prepare teachers include modeling, practice, feedback, and alignment. Modeling is observing an experienced teacher, practice is providing teachers the opportunity to practice teaching skills in various environments, feedback is providing teachers timely and actionable feedback on their instruction, and alignment is giving teachers structured prep experiences. These building blocks could improve student outcomes, improve teacher readiness, and increase retention.

Problem Statement

The problem is teacher frustration and burnout due to not receiving proper pre-service training does not adequately educate or prepare teachers to lead an inclusive classroom. Teacher frustration could cause the students to feel that they cannot succeed, or could lead to them being incorrectly sent to a separate special education classroom. Teachers in both general and special education have concerns with inclusive programs for students with learning disabilities (Mazher,

2018). IDEA (2004) stated that teachers have a responsibility to simultaneously teach students with disabilities the standard education curriculum, including self-determination skills.

Woodcock (2020) explained that teachers who believe an inclusive classroom was a beneficial method of teaching students provided greater feedback, felt less frustrated, and were less likely to expect future failure, which was the opposite of other teachers who felt more negative about inclusive education. Teacher attitudes toward an inclusive classroom decline after only one year, which could be due to classroom practices and their views toward inclusive education developed during the teacher training years. When teachers are not professionally trained and do not hold a proper understanding of students with LD, the lack of preparation can cause them to have lower expectations of the students' achievement ability, their capability, and their ability to reach their full potential. Teachers must believe in the benefit of inclusive education and that it is an effective way to instruct all students, but they must be provided with the necessary systemic support for inclusive education to work.

Teachers who are frustrated often use controlling or chaotic methods of teaching which can be de-motivating to the student (Moe & Katz, 2020). Raising teachers' awareness of their emotions and how they deal with them, as well as how students are affected by them, should be one of the primary goals of teacher training and continuous professional development. A teacher's emotional abilities and regulation can be acquired and improved through interventions, workshops, and training. When a teacher's psychological needs are met, they tend to be more supportive of the students. Motivating styles can be acquired through training that provides practice in supportive modalities, and be ingrained in ongoing professional development.

There needs to be additional research to describe the participants' perceptions of training as it relates to leading students with LD. In the past few decades, response to intervention has

adopted specific connotation by many teachers in the field, to provide intensive intervention that generates data to inform instruction and identify students who may require special education (Gartland & Strosnider, 2020). Students with LD often struggle with the processes needed for composition in writing, so adequate or increased training can help LD students (Saddler, et al., 2019). Teachers without a basis of proper pre-service training, may not adequately educate or prepare them to lead an inclusive classroom resulting in them becoming frustrated. If a teacher is not professionally trained to lead an integrated or inclusive classroom, they can become overwhelmed, and not provide the support that the student requires, or a lack of training could lead to the decision to move a student to a separate special education classroom. Mak (2019) stated that teachers lack assessment knowledge because of inadequate pre-service training, making professional development essential. The lack of appropriate pre-service training prevents the teacher from possessing assessment knowledge and skills which can prevent effective learning support.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to understand teacher pre-service training for teachers within the Northwest Georgia school system when helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. At this stage in the research, pre-service teacher training was generally defined as the education and training that student teachers received before entering the classroom. The theory guiding the study is Bandura's self-efficacy theory, as it addresses the impact of personal traits, family background, and institutional influences on aspects of children's lives on academic results, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, career decisions, and professional aspirations (Ion, et al., 2019). Bandura's worldview is based on the appreciation that teaching is a social, negotiated, and culturally responsive profession

(Mpofu & Nthontho, 2017). Bandura's theoretical background aims to understand the personal and nurtured teaching methods that pre-service teachers need to be effective in the classroom. Teacher efficacy is the belief in the teacher's capabilities to produce specific outcomes of student learning, even with students that may be difficult learners (Wang, et al., 2017). Teachers with a higher self-efficacy provide more flexible learning environments which better support the needs of the students.

Significance of the Study

The study addressed potential gaps in teacher pre-service training as it relates to leading an integrated classroom with students who have multiple learning disabilities. Teacher's knowledge and confidence in utilizing effective behavioral interventions and supports are important. Utilizing effective behavioral interventions and supports are important because these supports impact students' learning outcomes, attitudes towards learning, and overall school engagement (Oakes, et al., 2018).

The empirical significance of the study is when teacher education and their competencies are evident in specific ways such as managing lessons, organizing student work, strategies that focus on content processing by the student, and the development of critical and creative thinking (Brecka & Valentova, 2020). Training initiatives have placed more emphasis on specifying the competencies required by teachers to effectively prepare more teachers in the educational field (Pilgram, et al., 2017). It is important to ensure that the tools needed by teachers are identified, validated, and effectively taught through training programs to better assist students with LD. Providing teachers with the tools needed to assist LD students is essential in improving teacher self-efficacy.

The theoretical significance of the study is important because more students are being diagnosed with ADHD and other learning disabilities, and teachers could benefit from research on proper pre-service training to help students in an inclusive classroom. The number of students diagnosed with ADHD has increased in the last 20 years, since the early 2000s, to more than 10 percent (Bluth, 2018). The diagnosis rate doubled in girls but was still lower than in boys. The National Health Interview Survey, which is a federal annual survey of about 35,000 households, found that there had been a steady increase in diagnosis from 6 percent between 1997 and 1998 to more than 10 percent between 2015 and 2016. The rise in diagnosis suggests that better access to health insurance and mental health treatment through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) may have played a role in the increased numbers. Better understanding by doctors, new standards for diagnosis, and the increase in access to health insurance through the ACA is tied to the higher diagnosis numbers. According to research, advances in medical technology are another potential reason for the increase in numbers. Twenty years ago, pre-term or low birth weight babies struggled to survive, and those factors increased the risk of being diagnosed with ADHD.

The practical significance of the study is when teachers receive proper pre-service training, it helps to equip them for students with different educational needs. When teachers receive proper pre-service training, their reliance on other teachers lessens and allows them to have the confidence it requires to help their students. Teachers who feel they are not professionally trained express hurting both the classroom and their self-efficacy, stress, and burnout levels (Allen, et al., 2020). The study can be used to help administrators in other states review their training procedures so that their teachers are better prepared for an inclusive classroom. The goal of training is to enhance the classroom skills of teachers and improve teacher-student relationships by developing effective behavior plans, promoting emotional

regulation skills, and encouraging positive relationships. The teacher training course identified several benefits, including positive classroom behaviors, and the teacher feeling more in control and less stressed along with an understanding of the students' individual needs.

Research Questions

Understanding pre-service training is essential to helping students in an inclusive classroom. Pre-service training will assist teachers in helping students with various educational needs.

RQ1: How do current teachers describe the tools they are provided with during pre-service training to prepare them to teach students with multiple learning disabilities?

RQ2: How does teacher preparedness influence the interactions with students with learning disabilities?

RQ3: What methods are provided for field experience and student teaching to prepare teachers in the classroom for students with multiple learning disabilities?

Definitions

1. *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)* - developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that strongly influence behavioral and academic performance in the classroom (Al-Omari, et al., 2015)
2. *Inclusive Education* – children with and without disabilities physically being placed in the same classroom (Love & Horn, 2019)
3. *Self-efficacy* - belief in a person's capability to perform specific tasks within a specific required quality in a situation (Lee, et al., 2018)

Summary

Both general and special education teachers in inclusion programs voice their concerns about providing individualized instruction for students with ADHD and other learning disabilities (Mazher, 2018). Teachers voiced their concerns because although teachers provide an atmosphere of learning, they cannot control the students learning. Major federal laws state that teachers have a responsibility to simultaneously teach students with disabilities the standard education curriculum and self-determination skills.

Research needs to be conducted to determine if teachers are receiving adequate pre-service training to lead students with learning disabilities. Research does not focus specifically on teacher pre-service training as it relates to students with multiple learning disabilities. The problem is that when teachers are not professionally trained to lead an integrated or inclusive classroom, they can become overwhelmed, leading to the decision to move students to special education classrooms. The chapter included an overview of the information, background on the topic (historical, social, and theoretical), situation-to-self, which explains the personal connection to the research, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and research questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The phenomenological study examined teacher pre-service training for helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that *inclusion* is the idea of changing from seeing the student as a problem to seeing the education system as a problem that can be resolved through inclusive education (Barow & Ostlund, 2019). A lack of confidence to lead an inclusive classroom could be the result of a lack of teacher pre-service training.

Symptoms of ADHD become much more noticeable in more restrictive environments, such as a classroom because students are required to sit and focus for extended periods (Metzger & Hamilton, 2021). Teachers' tolerance towards children with learning disabilities is determined to be lower than expected, and studies have shown that the lack of pre-service training has contributed to this. Increased stereotypes of students with LD negatively affect teachers' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors towards these students (Zee, et al., 2020). Also, the research stated that teachers have lower expectations for students with ADHD as it relates to student performance.

The phenomenological study examined the methods teachers are given to be prepared to lead students with MLD in inclusive classrooms. It is essential to know what tools pre-service teachers are provided with to prepare them to instruct students with MLD. It is important to know how pre-service teachers describe the tools they are provided with to prepare them to teach students with MLD. Lastly, it is essential to understand how teacher preparedness dictates the reactions of students with multiple learning disabilities. The roles of teachers in an inclusive classroom have changed and now require an increased understanding of various disabilities,

types of appropriate instructional modification, and interactions with the students with disabilities in the classroom (Tuner, 2003). It is important to evaluate whether a student's success following expanded instruction varies as a function of their achievement level and to specifically evaluate whether this instruction benefits students who struggle in that particular area (Herold et al., 2020). Teachers should be aware that the same teaching method may not be beneficial for all students.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used to guide the research was Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977). Bandura's theoretical background aims to understand the personal and nurtured teaching methods that pre-service teachers need to be effective in the classroom (Mpofu & Nthontho, 2017). Teacher efficacy is the belief in the teacher's capabilities to produce specific outcomes of student learning, even with students that may be difficult learners (Wang, et al., 2017). Teacher efficacy can shape their performance because a teacher's self-efficacy is an important factor for their improvement, as well as student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Gumus & Bellibas 2021). Teachers with higher self-efficacy provide better learning environments that are flexible in meeting the needs of the students. Educators are essential to teaching and guiding their students each day. They spend a substantial portion of the day preparing their students with lesson plans, quizzes, and rules. Teachers have a great deal of information for the students, protocols that they must follow, and testing that the students are required to pass, this can create a challenge when there is a student with ADHD. Teachers have many responsibilities related to their students and therefore pre-service training is especially important.

Although teachers may have the desire to help all students, stringent timeframes may prevent them from effectively helping students with MLD. Students with MLD require, in some

cases, more time than the teacher has. Students with MLD require additional support in the classroom and to do this, teachers have to increase their classroom instruction (Pollack, et al., 2020). State requirements and administrator demands can impose strict guidelines that must be met. State requirements are important to understand when evaluating an inclusive classroom.

Positive highlights Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is utilized in determining the academic adjustments needed for students (Hazan-Liran & Miller, 2020). PsyCap can assist teachers with tools to help individual students with their individual needs. PsyCap is a personality-based resource rooted in positive psychology, used to evaluate abilities such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. At the time of this research, schools have attempted to integrate students with learning disabilities, such as ADHD.

The theoretical framework addresses the effectiveness of professional development intervention and the teacher's role, responsibility, and reaction to students with MLD. It focuses on pre-service teacher training, education coursework, and field experience. The framework also addresses special education training and preparedness for students who have LD. The theoretical framework will help to understand if teacher preparedness dictates their reaction to students with these issues. Teacher education and training are valuable in promoting a positive attitude towards inclusion, creating a need to prepare teachers who are capable and dedicated (Bentley-Williams, et al, 2017).

Bandura's self-efficacy (1977) is described as a person's ideas about their abilities and opportunities to be practical when implementing actions, such as behavior, communication, perseverance, and confidence (Karimova, et al., 2020). If a teacher believes that they can manage their classroom and maintain solid lessons, then it is more likely that they will successfully lead the classroom. The teacher will be able to realize in themselves their ability to achieve the

intended objective and subjective effect. Bandura's self-efficacy, as it relates to teachers, can be described as their belief in their ability to perform activities and their development while achieving their goals and objectives. Self-efficacy is important because it also allows the formation of achievement motivation and the choice of personal and professional standards.

Related Literature

For many years, students with disabilities were not able to receive public education and the services they received were less than adequate nor responsive to their needs (Kors, 2022). In response to this concern, congress passed a law that required school districts to provide free public education to eligible students. The law, entitled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each student has access to appropriate education regardless of disability (Turnbull, et al., 2018). IDEA characterizes an appropriate educational program as one that performs a non-discriminatory evaluation and is individualized based on each student's educational needs, including cognitive, behavioral, functional, and developmental areas. IDEA requires that each educational program allows a student to make appropriate progress despite the student's circumstances. IDEA not only requires appropriate educational services for students, but also the social, emotional, and life-skills support they need (Blad, 2022). Appropriate educational services would include the school system maintaining an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student, which includes special education, related services, and various supports that are based on peer-reviewed research. The requirements are designed for the student to advance appropriately in meeting goals, making progress in the general curriculum, and participating in general education and other school activities.

The IDEA is shaped by respect for diversity and reinforces opportunities for inclusion and participation in education, community, and employment (Blanck, 2019). The IDEA shifted

the path of public education for students with disabilities. Instead of utilizing one main curriculum for all students, the IDEA required appropriate individualized public education for students with disabilities. The IDEA provides federal educational funding to help cover the excess cost of meeting the needs of students of states that agree to educate students with disabilities and abide by IDEA's requirements. As of 2020, IDEA provided funding for seven million students with various disabilities (Blad, 2020). The 2020 budget for the IDEA program was 13.6 billion dollars. The IDEA program budget is beneficial to school districts because they do not have to take from their general education annual budget to meet the mandates of IDEA.

Many individuals who qualify for special education have one or more of the qualifying diagnoses listed on the IDEA (Marsico, 2022). The qualifying diagnoses can include attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, blindness, cerebral palsy, developmental delay, emotional disturbance disorder, epilepsy, deafness, intellectual disability, learning disability, orthopedic impairment, serious speech problems, and traumatic brain injury. ADHD is believed to be a disruption in normal brain development generated by genetic and neurological factors, as well as interactions with the environment (Gusman, et al., 2021). Typically, for students currently diagnosed with a disability, schools are supposed to evaluate the student's need for special education every 3 years (Laditka, et al., 2021). The effects of special education can be either positive or negative for a student. Special education can be beneficial, providing a supportive environment with patient teachers who have specialized training. Special education can also provide a negative environment for students including low expectations, negative stigmas, and discrimination.

ADHD is a cognitive disorder commonly affecting children (Vimalajeewa, et al., 2022). ADHD can interfere with many areas, including education, social interaction, and emotional

development, so early detection is essential for proper treatment. ADHD is one of the most common psychiatric disorders in childhood (Minder, et al., 2019). When an individual is diagnosed by a medical professional, ADHD is determined to be a chronic neurodevelopmental disorder that presents with core symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Scrandis, 2018). Symptoms of ADHD must be present before age 12 and present in two or more settings. The inattention symptoms can include failure to pay attention to detail, difficulty with sustained tasks, organization difficulties, and being easily distracted. The hyperactivity and impulsivity symptoms can include fidgeting or moving around a great deal while seated, leaving the seat when the expectation is to remain seated, as well as consistently interrupting others and blurting out responses (Tymms & Merrell, 2011).

Neurological studies have indicated that people with ADHD have cortical maturation delays, different dopamine receptor densities, and a lower cerebral volume in comparison to people without ADHD. Although previous studies have shown that ADHD is characterized by a delay in cortical maturation, it is not clear if it is secondary to developmental trajectories in the subcortical regions (caudate, putamen, pallidum, thalamus, hippocampus, and amygdala) (Wang, et al., 2021). Neuropsychological testing is not effective in diagnosing individuals with ADHD because of the quiet testing environment, but self-report scales are more effective in identifying the severity of the symptoms. Individuals who have symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity should be interviewed about functioning impairments, psychiatric history, and family history, along with a physical examination to eliminate the possibility of medical issues (Scrandis, 2018). Psychiatric history should include any current symptoms, past diagnoses, and treatments.

When a student is diagnosed with ADHD at school, there have been discrepancies noted in the identification of the disability when comparing student, family, teacher, and school administrative data (Shogren, et al., 2022). The Educational Longitudinal Study data of 2002 showed that different teachers, teaching different subjects, to the same individual would sometimes not agree on the identification of the student's disability. Identifying a disability is somewhat complex because both self-identification and administrative identification are influenced by many different factors. The administrative data system often identifies young students as having a disability based on several different criteria. Just the disability diagnosis alone, in itself, is not sufficient to qualify for special education services, but the evaluation data needs to also support the need for special education support and services because of the identified disability. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) requires that clinicians adequately link ADHD symptoms to impairments in everyday life functioning (Vazquez, et al., 2018). Impairment rating scales that are used are criticized because they do not specify ADHD as the source of impairment in their instructions, leading to potential issues with rating scale specificity. The American Psychiatric Association guidelines state that a diagnosis of ADHD must be made by performing thorough clinical interviews and administering ADHD behavior rating scales (Marshall, et al., 2021). The clinical interview attempts to determine the presence of core symptoms and how these symptoms affect the patient's everyday function and interaction. The patients are asked to provide detailed info on how these symptoms affect their social relationships and daily activities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) requires school districts to use Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for special education students (Beck & DeSutter, 2020). A student must first meet the eligibility requirements of special education, and

then the IEP team will be created. The IEP team is determined by the individual needs of the student, which may include experts, such as a speech therapist or occupational therapist, and the planning meetings occur every academic year. All special education meetings are required to have a facilitator who is responsible for coordinating and leading the IEP meetings. Effective and efficient collaboration between special education professionals, teachers, and parents is important. One main responsibility of facilitators is to encourage and support parent participation, ensuring that they understand the special education process and are familiar with the IEP wording and viewpoints. Parent involvement in the process of developing an IEP is authorized under the IDEA (MacLeod, et al., 2017). An IEP must include goals set for the student for that particular school year, and those goals must be different from the educational program guide (Jachova, et al., 2018). An IEP must also include a list of support services required to reach the outcomes established for the student. The IEP should also include the student's current educational performance level, where the educational program will be provided, all names of personnel providing the educational program, support programs provided to the student, the period for IEP review, and proof of the IEP review.

According to the IDEA, special education is to be individualized and based on each person's needs and abilities (Sanderson, et al., 2022). The individualization should be accomplished through an IEP, which is generally developed during an annual meeting. The IEP is used to determine the specific services and supports that a student will need for general education (Jachova, et al., 2018). Annual IEPs are for the student's IEP team to review data, discuss the student's progress, and set goals for the year (Biegun, et al., 2020). Although students with disabilities are not required to attend their meetings until age 16, the IDEA suggested that students should be involved in their IEP meetings. Since the IEP weighs heavily on a student's

education, the IDEA requires that parents be equally involved in the development of the IEP. Generally, students are not present during the discussion of their IEP, which reviews their learning goals, supports, placements, and transition plan. If a student is in attendance, they are not usually included in the conversation. IDEA has vague requirements for student attendance in IEP meetings and often they are not provided with opportunities to attend.

It may be assumed that students with disabilities are not able to make effective decisions regarding their educational goals and supports. Research shows that students who participated in self-advocacy intervention participated more during their IEP meetings (Sanderson, et al., 2022). IEP meetings not only help parents and educators to better understand a student's disability but also the student as well. IEP meetings can help to understand the resources that are available to them and provide them with self-determination skills that can help them transition to the next level. Student involvement in IEP development is linked to higher goal achievement and higher graduation rates (Cavendish & Connor, 2018). Student involvement with their IEP enables genuine collaboration and places them at the center of the process.

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that the responsibility of developing and implementing IEPs for students who are eligible under the IDEA lies in the hands of special education administrators and teachers (Yell, et al., 2020). Special education professionals act as the facilitators of the IEP meetings (Beck & DeSutter, 2020). Special education professionals coordinate the IEP meetings with other professionals, teachers, and parents to evaluate the student's progress and plan continuing strategies to help the student. Special education professionals interpret their role in three parts, which include procedural due process, informal problem-solving, and parental support. A productive IEP meeting includes a strong member presence, with one or both parental involvements, and achieving collaboration.

The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990 (Shapiro-Lacks, 2021). The purpose of the law was to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace and other areas of society, granting accessible accommodations for individuals with disabilities (Murphy, 2021). Accessibility would include ensuring that all buildings and products are designed for use by everyone regardless of disability. ADA also included general accessibility around the school, including classrooms, physical education (PE), athletic facilities, and during field trips. The purpose of the ADA was to provide a clear and comprehensive mandate to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities and provide clear, strong, enforceable stands to address discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

The ADA was enacted in 1990 to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the use of public services and the enjoyment of public accommodations (Pavlicko, 2021). The Act prohibited discrimination based on disability in all areas of public life, including five titles (Murphy, 2021). The ADA's definition of disability includes a physical or mental impairment that substantially impairs one or more of an individual's major life activities, they have a record of the impairment, and they are regarded as having such an impairment. On January 1, 2009, Congress amended the ADA, which broadened the scope of individuals who qualify with disabilities (Elliott & Carnes, 2022). This meant that individuals that did not qualify previously, now qualify, and are entitled to protection against discrimination.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was one of the first civil rights laws created to protect individuals with disabilities (Murphy, 2021). The Act was added to prevent discrimination against individuals and the lack of reasonable access to accommodations for individuals with disabilities in federally funded agencies (Shapiro-Lacks, 2021). Section 4 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires appropriate modifications and adaptations to permit

individuals with disabilities to participate in activities with their peers. Specifically, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals who would like to participate in federally funded programs or activities. If a federally funded program is found in violation, then its funding could be canceled.

The inclusive education movement attempted to integrate students with disabilities into the general education setting with accommodations, instead of separate classrooms or even separate schools (Weissman, 2020). Some examples of classroom accommodations may include modifying the format of quizzes and tests (multiple choice instead of Short Answer (SA) questions) or the option to withdraw from study at any time for any reason (Lopez, et al., 2020). Inclusive education is the accessibility of education for any student who is excluded from the traditional education system. Inclusive education generated debates about whether students with ADHD are best served learning with their peers or in separate classrooms with more resources. In 2015, the emphasis on educating students with disabilities was included in the Sustainable Development Agenda. The Agenda aimed to eliminate disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for individuals with disabilities.

Over the last several years, inclusive education has been extensively discussed in a growing body of research about educating students with LD. Inclusive education, in terms of educating all students in a regular classroom, has been defined as relocating special education practices in mainstream classrooms or changing school structures to make them more inclusive (Zembylas, 2019). Inclusive schools view diversity as the norm and ensure high-quality education for all students by providing a meaningful curriculum, effective teaching practices, and the availability of needed support (Shyman, 2019). Following the 1994 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Salamanca Statement

introduced the concept of inclusive education as a right to education in regular schools with inclusive education.

Inclusive education includes appreciating and valuing the diversity of all students in the classroom. Students with disabilities who are in an inclusive classroom achieve better academically and vocationally compared to those who attend non-inclusive school settings (Gigante & Gilmore, 2020). The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005) have proposed frameworks to ensure that schools adopt inclusive approaches to education, which provide all students with access to high-quality schooling, free from discrimination based on disability. The success of inclusive education weighs heavily on teachers' attitudes and their perceived efficacy in teaching students with disabilities.

The Joint Position Statement on Education adopted by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities AAIDD and The Arc in 2018 lists the elements of quality inclusion that are needed to support students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to gain access to the general curriculum with their peers (Palmer & Williams-Diehm, 2020). The primary purpose of these statements is to clarify, inform, and promote the well-being and understanding of the issues that affect individuals with disabilities and their families. Both the Joint Position Statement on Education and AAIDD stated that all children and youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities must receive a free appropriate public education that includes fair evaluation, ambiguous goals, challenging objectives, the right to progress, individualized supports and services, high-quality instruction, and access to general education curriculum in age-appropriate inclusive settings. The requirements for free appropriate education are essential to achieve the nation's four policy goals of quality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Students with IDD achieve

better outcomes when teachers provide individualized goals that closely match the learning outcomes of their peers who do not have disabilities (Chung, et al., 2019). Peer interactions between students with and without disabilities are more likely to thrive when students with IDD are exposed to the general education curriculum, work alongside their peers on the same or similar assignments, and work together on shared activities.

Gottfried et al. (2019) helped to understand how important general education classrooms are to students with ADHD. The study reviewed teacher pre-service programs and how they better prepare educators to handle inclusive learning. A study concluded that the competence of Science pre-service teachers was moderate regarding learning, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, and professional development (Obispo, 2022). Teacher education programs have an increased responsibility to ensure general education teaching candidates are adequately prepared to instruct students with disabilities. Teachers must develop the necessary skills for engaging all students, including those students with ADHD (Owiny, et al., 2019). General education classrooms should be the number one priority nationwide for students with ADHD.

When demands were made for the federal government to focus on outcomes and accountability in education, there was a shift from recommendation-based policies to requiring standardized testing (Potter, 2021). The testing is now known as teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) and has been the topic of controversy within the field of the certification of teacher candidates (Parkes, et al., 2022). The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) developed edTPA as the first nationally available educator-designed performance assessment for teacher candidates (TC) and was designed to be completed during their student teaching experience. Prior studies identified potential negative impacts on future teacher development,

including the high stress it places on the TCs. In less than a decade, the edTPA is now used by hundreds of teacher education preparation programs and in more than forty states. The edTPA is the most widely used evaluation for student teachers with many states requiring teacher candidates to pass edTPA to obtain their teaching certification. The new licensure requirement, edTPA, is a subject-specific performance assessment that requires teacher candidates to record themselves teaching a lesson and writing a series of essays (Gottfried, et al., 2019). On the other hand, the performance assessment, edTPA, improved their ability to educate students with disabilities. Teacher candidates felt more prepared to teach students with disabilities when they believed that their program was cohesive in its goals and expectations.

In the literature review, research examined the positive outcomes for students participating in inclusive education. Students with LD may struggle more than others in various areas. Allsopp & Haley (2015) showed that math can be an area of major difficulty because of the issues processing information. According to a study by the Mayo Clinic, 31% of people with ADHD struggle with math (Kennedy, 2020). A student with ADHD may have trouble with math due to memory-related difficulties, such as long-term memory retrieval, attention deficits, visual/spatial, auditory, and motor processing deficits. Some of them may also have metacognitive learning difficulties, language difficulties, and math anxiety.

The National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) showed a large gap in mathematics between students with disabilities and those without (Becton, 2018). Also, 62% of students with disabilities are found to read below the basic level on the NAEP reading assessment, compared to 19% of their peers without disability (Hock, et al., 2017). Students that read below the basic level can be a source of frustration for educators because it takes more time and effort to bring students, who are struggling, up to speed with other students. Pre-service and

ongoing professional developmental intervention can help to relieve the frustration because it provides teachers with tools to assist these students.

Most students with disabilities now spend much of their time in school receiving instruction in general education classrooms from general education teachers. Connor & Cavendish (2018) explained that based on the US's National Center for Educational Statistics, 95% of students with disabilities now receive most of their education in a general classroom setting. To encourage participation in general education classrooms, teachers should identify and arrange the individualized support that students need to be successful (Thompson, et al., 2020). General education teachers responsible for integrated classrooms have greater responsibility. The shift in students with disabilities moving to an inclusive classroom has resulted in many positive outcomes, but it has also created obstacles for teachers (Eyrolles & Reister, 2021). Gilmour (2019) confirmed that the education system now depends on general education teachers to provide instruction to all students because there is a shortage of certified special education teachers. Although integrated classrooms may cause additional responsibility for the teacher, this is a positive experience for students with ADHD because they do not feel isolated.

In the past, students with disabilities were dismissed from the regular classroom environment to receive special education instruction because it was believed that they could not be successful in a regular classroom (Williams, et al., 2018). Since special education was mandated in public schools in 1975, between 55.3% and 73.1% of students with disabilities spent most or all of their day in self-contained classrooms (Anderson & Brock, 2020). Special education certification serves as an indicator of teaching quality in practice and policy. Students taught by special education-certified teachers scored higher in math and reading (Gilmour, 2019). The study was performed to evaluate if elementary and middle school students with

learning disabilities scored better on state math and English language arts assessments when they were taught by teachers certified in special education or dual-certified in another area as well. Test scores were compared to when they were taught by general education certified teachers. Results showed that students with learning disabilities appeared to benefit from having a dual-certified teacher as opposed to a general education certified teacher.

The US Federal Government, through the IDEIA, provides funds for states to provide EI special education (Barger, et al., 2021). Children with disabilities and their families are supported by several services offered through special education and general education teachers (Sheppard & Moran, 2022). Developmental screening is an early identification process used to pinpoint special education needs. The early identification process is understudied, but special education is impacted by several factors. For example, HCPs vary across the board with their method of using validated screeners, often needing to provide office staff with adequate training. HCPs may even take a wait-and-see approach even though a referral might be necessary.

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher in-service professional development is utilized to improve classroom instruction and enhance the academic performance of students. Teacher professional development (TPD) is responsible for finding out what works and what does not work to develop teachers so that all students have access to high-quality classroom instruction (Svendsen, 2020). TPD is considered life-long learning for teachers and is an ongoing process by which teachers continue to grow for their students. Effective TPD will include critical reflection with others who share the same experiences and will actively engage teachers in a professional learning environment to increase their professional knowledge and student learning. Professional development activities can include courses and workshops, networking, seminars, research activities, and mentoring

(Gumus & Yurumez, 2021). At times, teachers in this country do not have regular access to in-service professional development every year (Ajani, 2020). Teachers should have access to regular and adequate professional development programs to provide quality education. The effectiveness of inclusive learning can be influenced by the quality of professional development that is made available to all members of the education field (Waitoller, et al., 2016). Georgia Teacher Professional Development (2022) stated that, in the State of Georgia, teaching certificates are only valid for five years and after that, professional development must be obtained through a regionally accredited post-secondary institution. For a teacher to be eligible for renewal, they must complete 6 hours of college course work, or 10 credits of Georgia Professional Units (PLUs), or 10 credits of U.S. Department of Education Teacher-to-Teacher Workshops, or 10 credits of continuing education under the International Association of Continuing Education Units (IACET).

Teacher professional development is a continuous process of effectively and efficiently improving their skills and knowledge (Aroca, et al., 2023). Teacher professional development can include training and development programs, developing teaching skills, and implementing effective approaches in the classroom. A qualitative study of fifteen K-12 in-service teachers in the same school district, located in the southeastern U S, was performed to gain insight into the professional development experience (Jones, et al., 2020). During professional development, the participants were given small group and individual learning assignments, being encouraged to seek assistance from current members and their peers, as well as share their knowledge. After the participants completed professional development, they reportedly had positive feelings about the activities and felt that the experiences provided them with benefits that would have never been realized. To develop the K-12 teacher workforce and to reach the goals set for students,

opportunities for professional development are necessary (Hite & Milbourne, 2022).

Professional development would include pre-service, induction, and in-service training so that teachers can develop content knowledge, expertise, and leadership skills.

Teachers are crucial to the students they teach. A teacher's responsibility requires that there be constant improvement in their teaching ability and activities. Teacher professional development is an ongoing process to improve their teaching strategies and help students of all learning abilities. Esmaili et al. (2020) confirmed that the effects of school conditions, leadership perceptions, and teacher motivation to improve teacher activity and professional development have a direct effect on teaching ability. Teachers who receive critical professional development can help frame them as politically aware individuals who have a stake in teaching students and transforming society (Kohli, et al., 2021). For instance, the Institute for Teachers of Colour Committed to Racial Justice (ITOC) was designed to foster retention, growth, and transformative leadership of teachers of color in K-12 schools. Maintaining high standards for the professional development of educators ensures they are well-prepared to assist K-12 students (Birch, et al., 2019). The most important factor in student learning and achievement is teachers, so they must be equipped with the skills they need to teach.

The effect of teacher motivation, leadership perception, and school conditions in conjunction with professional development is significant. Professional development can include structured in-service training, co-teaching, observations, book clubs, peer observations, and even discussions with fellow teachers (Osman & Warner, 2020). A teacher's motivation to implement what they have learned through professional development is influenced by both internal factors (teacher beliefs, attitudes) and external factors (school/district policies, curriculum constraints, and other professional development programs). To improve the skills of teachers there needs to

be a combination of motivation, appropriate leadership style, and a development of teachers' skills to enhance teaching activities in schools. Studies have shown that teacher support directly and positively affects motivation and self-efficacy over time, which positively impacts academic performance (Affuso, et al., 2022). Teacher support is also evidenced in the way that teachers learn and grow as instructors. Jackson et al. (2020) stated that effective instructional design should include the understanding and anticipation of the learning needs of the student. To learn the needs of the student, teachers must receive constant professional growth, along with refining their goals and objectives for faculty learning.

Teachers must constantly contribute to their knowledge base by addressing their professional development and constantly looking for ways to improve their instructional support. Teacher professional development is an important process because it trains the educator to know what works best for the student. Svendsen (2020) purported that students deserve a high-quality education, with teacher professional development allowing this to be a reality. Teachers learned to teach by adapting their existing instructional practices to be more effective and desirable (Kusch, 2016). Learning to teach would include not only specific lesson content, structure, and processes, but also goals and measurable objectives. Observed content knowledge of teachers and measurable teaching behaviors can be increased through a carefully designed intervention (Kim, 2020). Teacher professional development also includes knowledge of content and teaching, which helps with teaching productive ways to respond in the moment to students to support learning. Teachers decide what to teach and how to teach it by trying to understand their student's learning needs through their knowledge and experience to achieve outcomes. To improve student learning, the level of teacher content knowledge must increase, the difficulty

level of student content must increase, and the role of the student must change to make them more involved.

Teacher Training

Teacher preparation programs offer opportunities for teacher candidates to develop by gaining knowledge and learning skills through many courses, applying coursework through practicum, and student teaching (La Paro, et al., 2018). Setlhako (2019) determined that professional development begins with theoretical learning and the ability to implement practical skills that are needed in the classroom. The ability to implement practical skills needed in the classroom starts during the practicum. The practicum is a classroom-based opportunity under the supervision of a lead teacher, which provides teacher candidates with an experimental understanding of student learning and appropriate teaching strategies. The practicum is a necessary feature in the academic journey of student teachers. The practicum experience is important in the development of effective teachers. The approach to teacher education consists of general education courses, specialization content courses, education foundations, psychology, methods, and field experience usually consisting of teaching practice (Clark, 2021). The cooperation between the experienced teacher and the teacher candidate is influenced by other elements within the practicum experience, including communication, beliefs, fit, knowledge, and learning. Mentor teachers in conjunction with professional development help the teacher build a better classroom. The practicum experience may include having one classroom or multiple classrooms before student teaching and include different ages of students and racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds.

Teachers often develop professional communities because they share a common purpose with a primary focus on student learning, trust, and respect. Teacher professional learning teams

(PLTs) were developed because teachers had a shared language, and they felt they were achieving the same outcomes in the classroom (Wallace, 2020). PLTs encourage collaborative communities of learning among teachers that enhance discussions on teacher practice and student outcomes.

Another method proven to be helpful to teachers is mentorship models. Mentorship should be implemented in all cases because it will help with the quality of teaching. Providing mentoring programs for all teachers entering schools can affect the overall success and retention of excited new educators (Malette, et al., 2020). The implementation of mentorship models in teacher education has not been coordinated adequately and has not had standard guidelines in public schools. Teachers must be provided with professional development opportunities and an opportunity to participate in professional development to shape their professional identities (Akaba, et al., 2022). It is also important that teachers have access to professional communities to help them build stronger relationships with their peers and colleagues.

Philipsen et al. (2019) explained that many professional development courses are designed, developed, and implemented to provide teachers the opportunity to prepare themselves for teaching in an online and blended environment. Regardless of the method, five core features are required in professional development. The five core features include focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Johnson, et al., 2017). A teacher's belief about their ability as an educator and professional knowledge can positively impact the school setting, educational goals, and teaching results (Saglam, et al., 2023). Teacher professional development can be beneficial through an online and blended learning environment.

Teacher professional development is important because it increases the educator's knowledge and skills, affecting their knowledge and beliefs. Professional development is a

continuous process of improving teachers' knowledge and skills along with efficient ways of handling situations (Aroca, et al., 2023). Teachers can use professional development to improve their instruction and approach to the students, which will greatly benefit them. Teacher professional development is an important part of school progression, not only for the teacher but also for the students they teach (Littlefair, 2018). Professional development is multi-faceted and can help teachers in many different areas, which will in turn help students of all learning abilities. The raising of teacher standards is important for student achievement, and professional development can be important in this process. Professional development is not a one-time event but should be a constant activity throughout a teacher's career (Littlejohn, 2018). Professional development impacts several aspects of teaching, including the teacher, school improvement, and the student's standards.

Teacher Attitudes Towards ADHD

One of the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorders is Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Fenollar-Cortes, et al, 2017). To identify students who may be at risk for academic or behavioral issues, screening scales are sometimes used as part of a comprehensive school assessment. Teachers in the classroom spend the most time with students and are often the ones who refer a student for a clinical assessment. Their observations of a student's behavior at school are essential for diagnostic referrals and treatment decisions (Anderson, et al., 2017). Teachers play a significant role in the diagnostic process of ADHD in students (Degroote, et al., 2022). Teachers are often the first to identify ADHD behaviors in children. Evidence shows that a teacher's attitude towards teaching a student with ADHD can affect their choice of behavioral management options. The mixed views and lack of conclusive information about ADHD complicate things for both schools and teachers.

The ambiguity of ADHD can cause negative feelings in teachers where both positive and negative attitudes exist (Anderson, et al., 2017). A study showed that the quality of the teacher-ADHD student relationship is related to the student's behavior, the emotions of the teacher, the teacher's beliefs about ADHD, along with the teacher's approach and methods of work in the classroom (Krtok, et al., 2022). Strelow, et al. (2020) stated that students with ADHD feel misunderstood and mistreated, and educators feel overwhelmed by rising classroom stressors and a lack of knowledge needed to handle students' behavior. Ewe & Aspelin (2021) shared that teacher-student relationships are particularly challenging with students with ADHD, so they require teachers to observe, interpret, and reflect on their interactions because they are a prerequisite to student relationships. The three attitude components (beliefs, effects, and behaviors) indicated that pre-service and in-service teachers held negative beliefs, negative effects, and positive behaviors. Pre-service teachers reportedly had feelings of anger, anxiety, shame, pride, and enjoyment when teaching children with ADHD. Teacher-student interactions yielded mixed emotions.

In-service teachers reported that students cannot concentrate, they become easily bored, and cannot follow instructions (Anderson, et al., 2017). They also reported that students do not think before they act, are not self-regulated, and are careless. In-service teachers mainly complained about antisocial and disruptive actions, such as disobedience, willfulness, and violence. Teachers report that their pre-service training did not properly prepare them to manage ADHD behaviors and that these students can be more challenging to teach (Monteiro, et al., 2021). Pre-service teachers described students with ADHD as rude, naughty, and abusive. Although the majority of the comments about ADHD students were negative, there were also positive attributes mentioned, such as being intelligent, creative, funny, sociable, and likable.

Factors used to predict behaviors include attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived control (Dort, et al., 2020). Teacher attitudes toward students with ADHD are crucial in implementing evidence-based classroom interventions.

Interventions

Content Literacy

Students with ADHD can sometimes struggle with reading comprehension. Many students with ADHD also have difficulties with reading (Denton, et al., 2020). Those who have ADHD, along with a reading disorder, have more academic and social issues, along with more negative long-term life consequences. Reading motivation can be determined by the level of reading problems, social issues, and negative emotions, such as anxiety and shame (Lee & Zentall, 2017). Fenty & Brydon (2017) confirmed that training teachers to engage in targeted literacy content strategies can be instrumental in supporting the student's success. Research has shown that elementary school teachers possess the knowledge of literacy practices but lack preparation in how to incorporate the content into their instruction. When teachers are properly prepared for content literacy instruction, reading comprehension increases for elementary-age students.

Functional Behavior Assessment and Function-Based Intervention

The attention and behavior issues that students with ADHD experience often strain the relationship the teachers have with their students (Rushton, et al., 2020). Teachers of classrooms with children with ADHD experience issues, such as fatigue and negative feelings, struggling to manage successfully in their classrooms (Pham, et al., 2021). Negative behaviors in the classroom affect student learning achievement and the educational goals of their teachers. A diagnosis of ADHD can be both positive and negative for students because it can open doors for

valuable resources in school but may spark negative stereotypes from teachers about the diagnosed student (Metzger & Hamilton, 2021). The lack of knowledge and skills in behavior management can result in the teacher's efforts being time-consuming and ineffective. There have been positive outcomes from Functional Behavior Assessment and Function-Based Intervention in addressing behavior problems. Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is used to collect data about the behavior by analyzing the data to understand the possible functions of behavior before developing a classroom support plan.

FBA is a process utilized to find the primary function of challenging behaviors (Muharib & Gregori, 2022). Functional assessments may include indirect assessments (rating scales, interviews), direct-descriptive assessments (direct observations), and/or experimental functional analysis (Dufrene, et al., 2017). To find the most effective intervention, teams utilize an FBA to determine the function of a behavior and any environmental variables associated with the behavior (Johnson & Carpenter, 2022). The FBA process usually includes indirect assessments to determine challenging behaviors and to pinpoint the specific situations or environments where the target behaviors will most likely occur. Interviews may also be used to pinpoint events, settings, or other variables that could influence engagement in challenging behavior, such as medical or mental health issues. The variables could require more than just behavioral intervention, so they should be identified early in the FBA process so that appropriate treatment can be identified.

Direct observation of individuals is also a tool used to identify specific situations that ignite challenging behavior (Muharib & Gregori, 2022). Utilizing the results of the direct observation, a hypothesis of behavioral function is gathered, and a functional analysis (FA) is then conducted to confirm the hypothesis. The IDEA required the use of FBA where there were

behavioral concerns determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability (Losinski, et al., 2017). Functional Analysis is an experimental assessment where an individual is exposed to various environmental situations to attempt to isolate the variables controlling the challenging behavior. Studies show that the implementation of behavioral interventions, specifically the function-based intervention (FBI) may allow better inclusive experiences for students with disabilities (Walker, et al., 2017). Determining the behavioral function through an FBA is crucial in developing effective interventions and is often recommended as a pre-treatment assessment. An FBI is developed by using the results of the FBA.

An FBI is a multicomponent intervention that changes environments to reduce challenging behavior and, in some cases, increases social and communication skills (Muharib & Gregori, 2022). FBIs come from functional assessment data and are designed based on the reasons why negative behaviors happen rather than how the behavior looks (Common, et al., 2017). FBIs will generally include multiple components including 1) manipulations of the environment that try to attempt to prevent challenging behaviors from occurring, 2) teaching alternative behaviors that yield the same functional consequence as the challenging behavior while using differential reinforcement of alternative behavior or functional communication training, 3) providing reinforcement outside of the challenging behavior while providing noncontingent access a reinforcer, 4) withholding reinforcement for the challenging behavior utilizing an extinction procedure. The key to addressing challenging behavior is trying to understand what function the behavior serves the student (Hirsch, et al., 2023). If the FBA concluded that hitting was continuing because of the attention received, an FBI would use communication training to teach the person to stop an alternative response that results in access

to attention, subsequently withholding the attention for hitting. FBIs are known to be highly effective and more effective than non-function-based interventions.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD)

Writing is a skill required for learning in school and succeeding in the workplace. For over a decade, students' performance has not drastically changed, and students with ADHD continue to perform below their peers on national writing assessments. Most students are unable to write an organized response to a prompt that includes 1) main ideas and supporting reasons, 2) proper word choice, and 3) minimal mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Rouse & Kiuahara, 2017). The impact of school-wide reinforcement of SRSD in inclusive classes to improve students' writing and teachers' efficacy of teaching writing can be positive using this method (Ray, et al., 2023). SRSD is one method that may help students with ADHD improve their writing. SRSD is an evidence-based practice that can make a positive impact on student outcomes (McKeown, et al., 2021). The SRSD method has been thoroughly investigated and has an evidence base of 100 experimental, quasi-experimental, and single-case design studies supporting its effectiveness. Teacher continuing professional development includes activities related to their training utilizing literature, attending courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences, coach training, peer supervision, team teaching, good practices, and feedback (Velikova, 2020). The development of effective teachers who educate and train students requires the application of new forms of innovative education to build a generation of creative people.

Meeting the Needs of Students

General education teachers are tasked with meeting the unique needs of each learner in their classrooms, and this includes students with MLD. MLD is diagnosed by the existence of a set of behaviors that most of the time are a violation of classroom rules (Tegtmejer, 2019). Some

examples of disruptive behaviors include careless mistakes in their schoolwork, failing to complete schoolwork, leaving their seat, and yelling out answers. Hovey et al. (2019) proposed five strategies, which included building on prior knowledge, building vocabulary, explicit instruction, visual representation, and opportunities to respond to support students. Researchers have shown that students with MLD benefit from specific instructional strategies that increase the accessibility of the course content and possibly increase learning outcomes. Some classroom interventions for academic and behavioral outcomes might include academic contingency management and cognitive behavioral interventions, behavior modification techniques, peer tutoring, and self-regulation and monitoring (Moore, et al, 2017). Although students with MLD may have *roller coaster* relationships, the key to supporting these students is to maintain a positive relationship.

Educators are constantly challenged to meet the educational needs of a diverse set of students. They must also ensure that the methods they utilize show positive evidence for all students. Teachers must use interventions to increase success for students with MLD in their classes (Harrison, et al., 2019). Evidence-based classroom management strategies (CMS) are effective in lessening ADHD-related issues in the classroom (Strelow, et al., 2020). Students who have been identified as having ADHD often benefit from specific educational strategies that enhance their absorption of course content and improve learning outcomes. All these things working together can improve inclusive learning for all students. Self-monitoring is a low-intensity teaching strategy that educators can use to support classroom instruction (Ennis, et al., 2018). Self-monitoring supports the behavior of students with low levels of academic engagement to increase desired behaviors and reduce or eliminate negative behaviors. To implement self-monitoring, establish prerequisite conditions, identify and define behaviors,

design self-monitoring procedures, teach the student the procedures, monitor student progress, and consider follow-up.

The transition from elementary school to middle school can be somewhat challenging for students with MLD because literacy demands increase as students are required to gain information through reading. Students who have a reading disability and ADHD have more severe academic and social difficulties than students with either alone (Denton, et al., 2020). Lauterbach et al. (2020) showed that seventy-one percent of eighth-grade students with ADHD scored below basic in reading, compared to 18% of students without ADHD. The reading level makes it difficult for students with ADHD to absorb content from textbooks. Students with ADHD are at risk of reading difficulties, including lower reading comprehension, lower reading speed, and difficulty decoding words that have been associated with working memory deficits (Lawrence, et al., 2021). Students with ADHD are more likely to fail a class, and they fall behind the national average for graduating with a non-special education diploma.

Rogers et al. (2020) stated that students with ADHD scored lower than their peers in writing, organization, vocabulary, sentence fluency, spelling, and grammar. A study of students in grades 4 to 9 showed that the presence of ADHD was associated with lower performance in writing the alphabet from memory and handwriting legibility (Berninger, et al., 2017). The study also showed multiple regression results for writing, reading, and oral language outcomes. Practices that have been proven to improve outcomes for students with ADHD are explicit instruction and cognitive strategy to support learning and independence. Self-regulated strategy development incorporates both explicit instruction and cognitive strategy instruction. It is a cognitive strategy instructional model that combines strategy instruction and self-regulation of

the writing process (Liberty & Conderman, 2018). This strategy will help to support students' academic needs across several content areas.

Best Practices for Teaching Students with ADHD

Students learn best by taking an active role in various resources provided by the teacher, as well as piquing their curiosity for learning new concepts within a supportive environment (Lee & So, 2015). Inquiry learning is described as learner-centered and hands-on activities, which is gradually gaining importance because it helps with developmental thinking skills and active learning. Inquiry-based learning is a method used to develop a student's skills in collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Lu, et al., 2021). Collaborative inquiry-based learning is an instructional method utilized to nurture students' higher-order thinking skills. Higher-order thinking skills distinguish different learning methods that require different amounts of cognitive processing. Although instructing a classroom with minimal guidance might work for a solely regular learning classroom, it does not work for students with ADHD because of their inability to participate in inductive thinking. A one-size-fits-all learning design is not beneficial for students with ADHD, as the content needs to be designed to accommodate their needs.

One of the students (enrolled in a private school) in a study believed that the teachers' focus on individualized instruction helped him to accept the various modifications and accommodations as a student labeled with a disability (Lee & So, 2015). Another student from a public school environment believed that some teachers are better equipped to deal with students' disabilities than others. The student described ineffective ways that teachers tried to engage him by drawing negative attention to him when he started to be off task. Research indicated that the quality of the teacher-ADHD student relationship is related to the student's behaviors, emotions of the teacher, the teacher's beliefs about ADHD, the beliefs of the behavior of the student with

ADHD, and the teacher's approach and methods of work in the classroom (Krtok, et al., 2022). According to this study, participant teachers would misinterpret his actions and accuse him of being behaviorally defiant. ADHD often presents itself with behavioral and academic issues in the classroom (Gaastra, et al., 2020). Behavioral and academic issues cause teachers increased stress when teaching a student with ADHD. Consequence-based classroom management strategies require manipulation of events after a behavior and consist of reinforcement and punishment to alter behavior. Teachers with more positive beliefs about ADHD expressed that they utilize CMSs more often for students with behavioral issues. In creating a more inclusive classroom, teachers must embrace education as a gift for all students. Teacher education programs must assist school personnel in the design of inclusive instruction that also includes a learning style for culturally diverse students.

Students who exhibit significant behavioral problems that cause issues with their learning, as well as others' learning, will require teachers to devise a reasonable expectation plan for appropriate behavior and formulate a plan to change the behavior (Vostal & Mrachko, 2019). *DESCRIBE IT* is a strategy that teachers can use to help the process of behavior intervention planning and intervention that they learned in pre-service training. DESCRIBE IT is a first-letter mnemonic where each letter identifies a step for intervention delivery. Antecedent interventions help teachers to stop challenging behaviors before they start (Wood, et al., 2018). Before choosing an intervention, a teacher should do an FBA, as well as a preference assessment to determine the best method to choose. Behavior interventions and supports are positive ways to help students with ADHD meet their educational goals (Krtkova, et al., 2022). Also, intervention strategies for teachers can be beneficial for students because they are used to improve teaching effectiveness, to assist ADHD students, and include peer tutoring, instructional and assistive

technology, the teaching of meta-cognitive strategies, and cooperative learning. Teachers reported that students with ADHD manage the demands of school better when they receive rewards and praise for desirable behavior, as well as help with their social skills.

Classroom Management for Students with ADHD

Inclusive educational policies require schools to include students with special needs, so every teacher will, at some point, teach a student with MLD. Inclusive education is a core component of equal learning opportunities (Leifler, et al., 2022). Inclusive education should include the accommodation of all students' needs. Educational settings can be affected by behavioral and academic problems generated by ADHD students (Gaastra, et al., 2020). Due to the increased stress among teachers when teaching a student with ADHD, they may implement classroom management strategies. CMSs are scientifically proven to be effective and are important for educational policies in inclusive classrooms to contribute to the improvement of teacher support and training. Research has shown that many CMSs improve the educational functioning of students with MLD. It is recommended that only teachers who have received proper training on ADHD and its management should provide behavioral and classroom intervention, but it has been found that teacher training specific to ADHD interventions is lacking (Moore, et al., 2017). Some interventions can include academic contingency management, cognitive behavioral interventions, behavior modification techniques, peer tutoring, self-regulation, and self-monitoring.

Evidence-based classroom management strategies have been effective in reducing ADHD-related behaviors in schools (Strelow, et al., 2020). Individual differences in how teachers respond and react to a student with ADHD can be linked to their use of classroom management strategies. Evidence-based classroom management strategies for ADHD students

are categorized as antecedent-based, consequence-based, and self-regulation (Gaastra, et al., 2020). Antecedent-based CMSs influence events that precede target behavior, including the environment, task, or instruction, such as seating, tutoring, and choice-making. Consequence-based CMSs include the influence of events occurring after a target behavior and include reinforcement and punishment to change the frequency of the target behavior. CMSs can include praise, reprimands, ignoring the unwanted behavior, and tokens. Self-regulation CMSs are executed by the student to establish self-control and problem-solving skills. Self-regulation CMSs can include self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement. A statistical analysis indicates that all three CMSs improve classroom behavior for students with ADHD, especially consequence-based and self-regulation. To maintain the flow of instruction with the entire class, without constantly redirecting, ignoring disruptive behavior is the strategy often used (Tegtmejer, 2019). Also, teachers may use several verbal and non-verbal methods to control the classroom, including short, repeated instructions, utilizing the student's name, as well as gently touching the student's shoulder.

Academic impairment and behaviors increase as LD students move from elementary school to middle school, partially due in part to an increased expectation for functioning independently (Harrison, et al., 2020). Important knowledge gaps exist with pre-service teacher knowledge of CMSs when recognizing effective commands, positive reinforcement skills, and the assessment of on-task behavior (Gaastra, et al., 2020). A teacher's experiences with behavior management in the classroom can be affected by time, administrative support, and resources, but can also be affected by teacher knowledge, skills, and beliefs (Mikami, et al., 2019). In-service teachers note that they use modification and environmental and assignment modification more often for inattentive and behavior-typical students. Special education teachers with moderate to

extensive knowledge and training in managing MLD show that they utilize CMSs more often than those with little training. Reportedly, the teacher's usage of CMSs for students with ADHD is not related to their years of experience and training with the disability. Teachers with more positive beliefs about ADHD stated that they utilize CMSs more often for students with behavioral issues. Teacher efficacy may also play a role in the usage of CMSs. Teacher efficacy represents a teacher's belief that they can influence how well a student can learn, even the student who may appear difficult or unmotivated. Higher teacher efficacy is believed to be associated with a higher usage of positive CMSs.

Technology for Helping Students with ADHD

Information and communications technology (ICT) has been known to equalize learning for students with ADHD participating in learning activities (Wu, et al., 2018). ICT allows students who would have normally not been able to participate in learning activities to participate in learning and communication in the classroom. Students with ADHD exhibit difficulty in performing shifting tasks (Harper, et al., 2022). The difficulty is because of deficits in a child's working memory and/or inhibitory control abilities. ICT has been known to improve shifting accuracy.

Students with ADHD are more likely to show evidence of working memory deficits (Friedman, et al., 2022). Working memory is closely related to ADHD's core symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Students with ADHD are more likely to struggle with working memory, versus other students, including the simultaneous processing, storing, and integrating of multiple pieces of information (Hord, et al., 2016). Working memory deficits are well documented in children with ADHD with experimental and meta-analytic investigations (Jusko, et al., 2021). However, the difficulties can be corrected if the teacher ensures that the

instruction builds on previous knowledge from the classroom. When new information is connected to information in long-term memory, limitations of working memory become less of a barrier, especially for students with ADHD. The students have a better opportunity to store, process, and integrate complicated, multifaceted concepts when they are associated with what they already know from the inside and the outside of school.

Academic vocabulary knowledge affects adolescents' access to subject matter content and can predict their overall academic achievement (Beach, et al., 2015). Studies show that vocabulary knowledge and academic language proficiency greatly influence academic careers (Schuth, et al., 2017). Students are supposed to be able to communicate about concepts and models, developing arguments and solutions for problems. Proficiency in these skills, known as academic language, is vitally important for reading comprehension and overall academic success (Friedburg, et al., 2017). Out of the five key areas of reading for students, vocabulary is one area of importance. Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and a student's reading comprehension skills. Explicit vocabulary instruction is needed to improve academic achievement in diverse classrooms where students are struggling with reading. Unfortunately, many teachers only allot a minimal amount of time, if any at all, to instruction on word meanings.

Summary

Often students with MLD will be forced into a special education environment which could be detrimental to not only their learning but also their self-esteem. When a student, especially those with learning issues, is separated from their friends and dismissed into a special education classroom, they can feel isolated and less than others. The unfortunate thing is that many of these students with MLD may have higher IQs than their counterparts but are often left

feeling that they are not smart. The only way to resolve this issue is by making sure that educators are professionally trained during pre-service, and also receiving continued professional development to give them the tools needed to handle inclusive learning.

Reviews have indicated that teachers who participate in regular professional development, along with either a mentor or mentor group, are better able to assist students with MLD in the classroom. Many educational environments do not require regular professional development, causing the teacher to be ill-prepared to handle an inclusive classroom. Additional research should be performed to monitor the inclusive classrooms of teachers who received substantial professional development versus those who did not. Although there have only been a few studies performed on regular mentor groups, the outcomes showed a positive result. Mentor groups could also be beneficial for teachers to maintain an inclusive classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of teachers in Georgia and how the pre-service training received by them prepares them for an inclusive classroom, including students with multiple learning disabilities. The research was used to examine teacher pre-service training for helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The phenomenological study was used to review the training of 12 teachers who had at least one year of experience in the classroom when helping students with MLD. A lack of training could also be the result of students being forced into special education classrooms as a solution instead of a last resort. A national push to remove students with disabilities from a segregated classroom means that much of their day is spent in a general education classroom rather than a separate special education classroom (Mader, 2017).

Although pre-service teachers had positive attitudes towards classroom inclusion, they lacked confidence in their ability to be able to meet the needs of children with more complex special education needs (Hopkins, et al., 2018). The research study explored the methods teachers are provided to teach students with MLD in an inclusive classroom. The interpretive lens focuses on disability as a human difference and not as a human defect (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Viewing individuals with disabilities as different is reflected in the research process, including the types of questions asked, the labels placed on these individuals, considerations of how the data collection will benefit the community, the appropriateness of communication methods, and how the data are reported respectfully. The chapter will present the following for

the research study, design, research question, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and summary.

Research Design

The study utilized qualitative research with a phenomenological research design. The phenomenological research approach is appropriate because it provides a common meaning for several individuals and their lived experiences. Phenomenology is designed to help scholars learn from the experiences of others (Neubauer, et al., 2019). Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on an individual's lived experiences. Phenomenology will be beneficial when researching teacher professional development and the training experiences of several teachers (Tomaszewski, et al., 2020). The qualitative method was the best method used for the study because it allows the research to be performed on a more personal level rather than mainly focusing on the numbers and statistics. The qualitative method helped to understand research matters rather than trying to predict the outcomes. Qualitative research also helps to build knowledge by understanding an individual's unique viewpoints and the meaning attached to those viewpoints. Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of the individuals being studied (Agius, 2013).

The phenomenological approach to qualitative research primarily focuses on the lived experiences of others or the phenomenon that can be felt by individuals with different viewpoints (Tomaszewski, et al., 2020). The phenomenological approach is often used in studies that are focused on understanding a particular group of people's lived experiences. The phenomenological approach can help when trying to capture the way a phenomenon was lived out by people participating in the phenomenon. In other words, it helps to understand 'what' the individual experienced and how they experienced it. Phenomenological research is the best

method to research teacher pre-service training because it provides the researcher with a detailed explanation of the phenomena. Phenomenology focuses mainly on the particular experiences of a person, in this case, a teacher, or the object of that teacher's perception, instead of the teacher's biography, attitudes, or social norms (Wright, 2015). Phenomenology uncovers the deeper human aspect of a situation which can empower practitioners and service users. Also, it allows the collection of data from different teachers in the same category of pre-service training.

Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach to qualitative research used to understand the human experience and is grounded in the concept of putting aside all preconceived ideas to see the phenomena clearly, therefore, allowing the phenomena to naturally emerge (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is an avenue for exploring and describing shared experiences related to the phenomenon being studied. Noesis is the perfect self-evidence or the act of feeling, thinking, remembering, and perceiving and is how noema is experienced; it is an individual's internal perspective that provides meaning to the noema. Noema assigns meaning to what a person sees, thinks, touches, or feels, understanding that each experience has significant meaning for each individual. Noema is not the object, but the phenomenon and how the object is perceived or experienced (Sheehan, 2014).

Transcendental phenomenology can be used to collect data from teachers who have experienced pre-service training, otherwise known as a *phenomenon* in this particular study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental phenomenology will also be used for exploring patterns of thought and behavior. Moustakas (1994) developed methods and procedures of phenomenological inquiry that spanned from pre-data collection strategies to data analysis. Phenomenology research, in conjunction with transcendental research, allows the specific experiences of each participant to provide a better understanding of the pre-service training they

received for their classroom. Phenomenology research should also provide an understanding of whether the teacher participants feel that the pre-service training prepared them for an inclusive classroom to teach students with MLD. The research will seek to understand the participants' lived experience, which includes pre-service training versus their feelings about the training received once they were placed into an inclusive classroom.

Focus groups are a common qualitative research data collection method because of their efficient and economical nature. Focus groups are defined as group discussions identifying a set of specific issues that are focused on because they involve collective activity (Flynn, et al., 2018). Focus on the interactions between participants to collect and provide a large amount of qualitative data. The qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing focus group data should include identifying types of data that can be collected while conducting the focus group and outlining qualitative data analysis approaches that are suitable for analyzing the focus group data (Onwuegbuzie, 2018). The idea of focus groups has changed somewhat over the years, especially with the evolution of social media. Focus groups once meant that a group of participants would all need to be sitting in the same room together, but because of technology and social media, focus groups can be conducted utilizing Skype, Twitter, chat rooms, and videoconferencing. Utilizing technology can also help with funding challenges.

Questionnaires were used along with focus groups (Har-Shemesh, et al., 2020). Demographic information, as well as open-ended questions, were used. Questionnaires are an effective way of data collection because, although differences in motivations are subjective and sometimes difficult to measure, questionnaires are a common method used to capture the information (Hughes, et al., 2023). Interviews were utilized because they can be used to gather detailed, valuable information through personal experiences and one-on-one conversations.

During interviews, participants can relay their experiences freely and naturally, leading to more detailed insights and a more comprehensive picture of the investigation's subject matter (Suhr, et al., 2020).

Research Questions

RQ1: How do current teachers describe the tools they are provided with during pre-service training to prepare them to teach students with multiple learning disabilities?

RQ2: How does teacher preparedness influence the reactions to students with learning disabilities?

RQ3: What methods are provided for field experience and student teaching to prepare teachers in the classroom for students with multiple learning disabilities?

Setting and Participants

Site (or Setting)

The setting of the study was K-12 schools within the Northwest Georgia school system. There are 18 schools in this district consisting of 10,843 students. The school district consists of 93.6% White, 2.4% Black, 1.1% Asian, 1.9% two or more races, and 2.4% Hispanic/Latino. This setting was chosen because of its convenient location and the school familiarity of the researcher which will allow quick access to teachers for interviews. Because of the familiarity with Georgia county schools, permission to access teachers was easier. The geographic location was Georgia County School via video conferencing. The site location was chosen because the county schools are still limiting visitation due to the previous pandemic. All interviews were conducted via video conferencing, but the location made it easier to meet the participants if necessary. Georgia county schools are led by the superintendent and the board of education, consisting of 12 members. Although there are principals and assistant principals for each grade level, the primary

leader that must be contacted for permission to conduct interviews is the superintendent of schools. The superintendent is located at the Board of Education. The superintendent and Board of Education approved the request to meet with teachers and I coordinated with their schedules for the interviews.

Participants

The size of the sample pool was 10-15 K-12 teachers, consisting of male and female teachers in Georgia County between the ages of 22-60. The participants totaled 12, and all have experience teaching in an inclusive classroom environment. The type of sample that was used is purposeful sampling; this was used to gain different perspectives during the research process. Purposeful sampling is often used in research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, et al., 2015). Once any concerns from the participants were addressed, this indicated that not only was ethical approval obtained, but also the participants' consent to engage in the research, and the participants, along with their information, were anonymized (McSherry, et al., 2019). When selecting participants, ethical approval, informed consent, and confidentiality are primary concerns.

Researcher Positionality

The phenomenology study was to examine teacher pre-service training for helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The motivation for the study is rooted in personal experience because my son was diagnosed with ADHD when he was six years old. Before he was diagnosed, his teacher was adamant that he needed to be placed in a special education class. He was and still is very smart, but he was very hyperactive. The teacher expressed her displeasure several times with the fact that she had to take time to help him when she had a lot of information to cover in a day. I refused to allow him

to be placed in special education and arranged with the administration for him to complete all work at home that was not completed in class. Each day the teacher would send stacks of work home to complete and, although I would have to re-direct him several times, he completed it. There were years of meetings and hours of homework, but he graduated and accepted a track scholarship to a private university and will be graduating in the fall. He now plays Rugby and has a pro tryout this summer. If I had allowed him to be placed in special education, I feel that his self-esteem would have suffered, and he would not have been admitted into a private university. I believe better training is needed to help teachers with students in the classroom instead of sending them to special education that they do not need.

Interpretive Framework

The paradigm used for the study was pragmatism because it is about understanding characteristics and the effects of interventions (Evans, 2022). Pragmatism is about the question as well as the evidence gained by using real-world data. Pragmatism helped when attempting to explain how effective teacher training relates to students with multiple learning disabilities remaining in the regular classroom.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions center on values and belief systems within individuals. Ontology assumptions review the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Epistemology assumptions are what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is justified. Axiology assumptions review values in research. Pragmatism assumptions come from actions, situations, and consequences rather than pre-existing conditions.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions reveal one's beliefs on the nature of reality. Is there one

universal reality or are there multiple realities? Constructivist assumptions include individuals who seek to understand the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivists understand that change is intangible, nonlinear, and qualitative in nature (Lincoln & Hoffman, 2019). Constructivism relates to the study because it is an educational premise based on learner-centeredness where new experiences are built on a connection to past experiences (Hashmi, et al., 2021). Constructivism is increasingly being added to the design of education curricula to enhance learning experiences and learned outcomes (Cavenett, 2017). Although inclusive classrooms have not always been the norm, teachers are being placed in an environment where they must find a way to ensure success for all students. So, teachers build on past classroom experiences and modify them for students with MLD to try to make the inclusive classroom work.

Epistemological Assumption

The Epistemological assumption addresses what counts as knowledge, how knowledge claims are justified, and, more specifically, what is the relationship between what is being researched and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike the other philosophical assumptions, including constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism, the philosophical assumption of epistemological means that the researcher tries to get as close to the participants being studied as possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher needs to be intricately connected to the participants so that they will be more open and honest. The research participants need to be open and honest so that the necessary changes can be made. The improvement of academics, behavior, and socially acceptable outcomes has been a significant commitment amongst researchers, policymakers, and education professionals in the United States, for students with ADHD (Kourea & Lo, 2016). US legislation for elementary and secondary education

students with ADHD requires the identification and usage of beneficial educational strategies that are shown to improve student outcomes. Behavior exists only individually, and environmental variables can influence each individual's behavior. Beliefs and ideas in education can cause positive changes for teachers and students, which can be encouraged during pre-service training.

Axiological Assumption

The Axiological assumption describes the extent to which the researcher's values are known and brought into a study. I believe that all children should be treated equally in the classroom, regardless of disability. The only way for equality to be the standard practice is through proper teacher pre-service training. The study is personal to me because of my experiences with teachers and administrators concerning my son with ADHD. Although my experiences were not as positive as I would have hoped, I will not allow that to create bias in my research.

Researcher's Role

The motivation for the study was that my son has Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and, although teachers fought diligently to place him into a special education class because he was very hyper, I fought just as strongly for him not to be placed in this class. It required large amounts of extra time for me to help with work he did not complete in class, and having constant follow-up meetings, but it was beneficial for him, and I would not change anything. My role as a researcher conducting qualitative research was to collect information with integrity and maintain the confidentiality of all participants. I followed all guidelines and stayed within the parameters of the IRB requirements. I did not have a relationship with the participants, but there were a few teachers that I know because they were former teachers of my

children. I contacted the superintendent for the county, to gain approval for the video conferencing. Although I may have had a slight bias in the study because of how my son's disability was handled when he was in school, I did not allow this to affect my research. I used bracketing or putting aside my personal experiences to maintain an unbiased opinion in this research.

Procedures

Permissions

In this section, all necessary permissions were explained and documented as appropriate. The first step in conducting the study was to identify the problem and perform an extensive review of the associated literature. Before gathering any information from participants, Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was requested. The IRB (See Appendix A) application was sent to Liberty University through the Cayuse IRB system. IRB approval was secured and the process for eliciting participants began. When gathering data, an open-ended questionnaire was used because these are primarily used for qualitative studies. The questionnaire covered teacher training experiences, teacher thoughts about the training, and teacher feelings about how the training prepared them for the classroom.

Recruitment

I gathered participants by sending out a recruitment letter to participants via social media. Then, I obtained consent (See Appendix B) from the ones that are willing to participate in the study. Next, I sent the questionnaire to the participants for completion and then scheduled interviews. The information sheets and signed consent forms were securely stored in a locked case that is only accessible to me. All surveys were digital and stored on a password-protected computer. I will secure the information for 5 years and, at the end of this period, I will shred all

documents at a secure location. I do not have a leadership role within the school district; I have been a parent within this district for over 20 years.

All questionnaire data was collected via Survey Monkey because this will allow the information to be collected more easily. Survey Monkey is an online service that allows the researcher to create surveys and receive responses quickly. Survey Monkey allows you to manage several users and view all data collected with administration controls and dashboards. Survey Monkey ensures confidential data is protected with enhanced security including encryption, Single Sign-on (SSO), and features that help to remain compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This data was also collected by email for teachers who do not feel comfortable completing the questionnaire online. The questionnaire was approved before being distributed to the teacher participants. Before sending the questionnaire, participant information sheets were collected, along with consent to use all data received from the study. The information sheets and signed consent forms were securely stored in a locked case that is only accessible to me.

When the questionnaire was received by the researcher, each participant received an email confirming the receipt of their completed questionnaire and an appreciation email for participating. For teachers who did not return the questionnaire, a check-in email was sent thanking them for their participation and requesting that they return the completed questionnaire within 3 days. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing, such as Zoom or Skype, and was recorded. Interviews were also offered in person for teachers who felt comfortable meeting face-to-face. The participants were made aware that the interview was being recorded. The recorded conversations were also securely stored on a device that is password protected and made unavailable to any outside person who is unrelated to the research study.

Once all data was collected, it was organized in the manuscript. All terms were defined, and any outstanding issues were addressed. The research was forwarded to the Chair and all necessary corrections will be made. The research in its entirety, once approved by the Chair, will be forwarded to the Committee. The last step will be dissertation defense.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection for the study included individual interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires. The sources of data was used to gather information about the phenomenon of interest, specifically the experiences of teachers in an inclusive classroom. Qualitative research includes various data collection techniques that include consent, rapport building, and depending on how sensitive the subject matter is, managing and responding to emotion, and offering appropriate longer-term support (Mitchell & Irvine, 2008). Preparation is important when approaching a new and unfamiliar research topic. It is important to obtain background knowledge which could include benefits for the participants' well-being and improved understanding of how they may respond with the research encounter.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Interviews were conducted with teachers to gather information about their pre-service training, specifically for students with minor learning disabilities. This was beneficial in knowing the amount of preparation teachers have when entering the classroom. The interviews were recorded via Zoom or Skype with a duration of 1 hour.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself such as your age, highest level of education, and how long have you been a teacher in this county. (RQ1)
2. How long have you been a teacher? (RQ1)

3. What subject(s) do you teach? What grade level? (RQ1)
4. When did you realize that you wanted to be a teacher? (RQ1)
5. What influenced you to become a teacher? (RQ1)
6. After high school graduation, how long was it before you started your journey as a teacher? (RQ1)
7. Tell me about your general experiences in a classroom before completing teacher training. (RQ1)
8. What types of pre-service training were you provided with? Was it offered online or in person? (RQ1)
9. What pre-service preparation and/or training did you receive to teach students with disabilities? (RQ1)
10. Please detail the different aspects of your training. What did the training include? (RQ1)
11. Explain how your training prepared you to work with students with multiple learning disabilities. (RQ2)
12. What, if any, part of the training was specific to teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? (RQ2)
13. What do you feel could have been included in pre-service training to better prepare you for an inclusive classroom? Why? (RQ2)
14. Please describe your experience in the classroom the first month after training. (RQ2)
15. Based on pre-service training, how do you feel you were prepared for this experience of teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? (RQ2)
16. Please describe your personal feelings when teaching children with multiple learning disabilities including students with ADHD in an inclusive classroom. (RQ2)

17. How do you feel that teacher preparedness and training could influence teacher interactions with students with learning disabilities? (RQ2)
18. What requirements does your school have regarding ongoing professional development courses? How often are you required to attend? (RQ2)
19. Please describe any ongoing professional development courses you have participated in, if any. (RQ2)
20. How have the professional development courses helped you as a teacher? (RQ2)
21. How have the professional development courses helped you with your inclusive classroom? (RQ2)
22. Please describe any opportunities offered to you to participate in field experience before teaching in your inclusive classroom. (RQ3)
23. Please describe any student teaching opportunities that were made available to you before teaching in an inclusive classroom. (RQ3)
24. Were these opportunities beneficial to you as a teacher when teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? If so, why? (RQ3)
25. Looking back to your pre-service training, what would you change or add that could have better prepared you for an inclusive classroom? (RQ3)

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Questions one through three are background questions and are designed to learn more about the participants and why they selected this field as a career. These questions are intended to be relatively straightforward and non-threatening and will ideally serve to help develop rapport between the participant and me. The questions may be adjusted slightly as necessary for each participant.

Carales (2020) explained that pre-college and background characteristics, college experiences, and environmental factors can predict persistence, degree completion, and transfer or bachelor's degree completion. Success factors are why it is important to gather information concerning the educators' background and why they selected the field of study. It is essential to understand the participants' motivation for wanting to pursue the field and why. Questions four through five are designed for these purposes.

Questions six through eight invite the participant to reflect on his or her training experience. The participants' specific training experience can shape their success or failure in the position, and it can also determine their job approval. Markiewicz (2019) explained that work stress has become a common problem for employees. Stress sensitivity and situational factors can be predetermined by stress at work and being overworked. Unfortunately, a high level of demand in unison with a lack of support and training can cause burnout.

Questions nine through 13 detail the educators' pre-service training related to their experience in the classroom. It is necessary to gain the teachers' perspective of the training and the benefit, or lack thereof, in the classroom. Pre-service training is essential to a positive classroom experience for both the teacher and the student. Elementary classroom teachers have experienced negative attitudes due to experiences with students and inadequate pre-service education as barriers to quality teaching (Fletcher, et al., 2013). Pre-service teachers with relatively low scores at the pretest showed significant growth in relation to interaction skills, including sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, and verbal communication (Fukkink et al., 2019). While institutional factors influence the implementation of programs, focusing on teacher-related factors may have a greater impact on how teachers view and teach students.

Questions 14 through 25 allow the participants the opportunity to describe their professional development. The effectiveness of teachers in increasing student achievement is a major issue in educational research (Aypay, 2009). Individual performance and efficiency are important factors that contribute to and directly affect institutional goals. Pre-service teachers have noted that a major factor impacting their emotional patterns is their students and their supervising teachers (Yang, 2019). Evaluating teacher training programs based on output is accepted as an important topic that could potentially lead to improvements in teacher training.

Questionnaires

Schelfhout, et al. (2006) explained that a questionnaire to evaluate the degree of creating a powerful learning environment during internships could be constructed and validated. A questionnaire was used to gather information concerning teacher training. The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long have you been teaching?
5. What pre-service training did you receive?
6. Please detail the pre-service training you received specifically for students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
7. What subject do you teach currently? What grade level?
8. How often do you receive continuing education?
9. Was it your choice to teach in an inclusive classroom or was this decision made by the Administration?

10. If you had the choice, would you continue to teach in an inclusive classroom?
11. What is the most difficult part of teaching in an inclusive classroom?
12. Please describe your current experience working with students with multiple learning disabilities.
13. Please describe any pre-service preparation that you received before teaching in an inclusive classroom.
14. What pre-service training did you receive to prepare you to specifically teach students with multiple learning disabilities?

Questionnaire Data Analysis

Questions one through three are demographic questions to learn more about the participants. These questions can determine any differences in pre-service training related to age or gender. Teacher demographics, such as gender, age, and race can affect their perceptions of challenging behaviors (Alter, et al, 2013). Significant differences were recognized according to gender, grade level, and years of teaching.

Questions four through eight are related specifically to their teaching. It is essential to understand the length of time they have been teaching because the pre-service training could be different. It is also necessary to understand how often the teacher receives continuing education to assist with how to help students in an inclusive classroom. Professional standards are redefining the role of teachers through continuing education to reflect wider demands and expectations (Torrance & Forde, 2017). Continuing education seeks to help teachers improve their ability to work effectively in different contexts.

Questions nine through 14 were used to explore the feelings of teachers in an inclusive classroom. What are the differences between teachers who were forced into this classroom

setting versus teachers who chose to teach in this environment? The current trend is to develop policies and procedures for inclusion of all students into the mainstream classroom (Casserly, et al., 2019). Inclusive education can increase participation and decrease exclusion from the community and the mainstream school curriculum to overcome barriers to participation and learning for all students.

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

Utilizing the qualitative research method of focus groups can allow the researcher to gather in-depth information from small groups of participants, but it can be quite time-consuming (Winlow, et al, 2013). The advantage of using focus groups is to allow participants to shape the research, allowing dialogues versus interrogation. A focus group consisting of five teachers was utilized via video conferencing, which will last one hour. The group of selected teachers participated in a monitored and recorded video conference concerning the pre-service training they received.

Focus groups are a common qualitative data collection method and are considered an important qualitative research technique (Flynn, et al., 2018). Focus groups are defined as group discussions exploring a set of specific issues that are focused because the process involves various collective activities. The primary benefit of focus groups is that they encourage interactions between participants as a means of collecting qualitative data that would not arise using any other methods, such as interviews.

Focus Group Questions

- 1) What pre-service training did you receive?
- 2) What training was used, if any, to ensure that you were adequately prepared for an inclusive classroom?

- 3) What aspects of pre-service training did you find useful?
- 4) What aspects of pre-service training did not adequately prepare you for the classroom?
- 5) If you had the choice, what changes would you make to pre-service training?
- 6) What are the positive and negative aspects of teaching in an inclusive classroom?
- 7) What requirements does your school have for your participation in ongoing professional development courses? If any, how often?
- 8) Please describe any ongoing professional development courses you have participated in, if any.
- 9) How have the professional development courses helped you as a teacher?
- 10) How have the professional development courses helped you with your inclusive classroom?
- 11) What additional ongoing training would be beneficial to help you teach students with multiple learning disabilities?
- 12) Please provide additional information about teacher preparedness and teaching students with multiple learning disabilities.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Questions one through five ask the participant to detail pre-service training. Pre-service training of teachers is essential in safeguarding the future of our schoolchildren (Eriksen, et al., 2020). It is necessary to understand what each participant took from the training. Since all teachers receive the same training, do they all agree on the benefits and drawbacks?

Question six addresses the teachers' feelings toward inclusive classrooms. Pre-service and in-service training have shown that there are effective approaches to strengthening interaction skills with the students (Fukkink, et al., 2019). If a teacher is not happy with their

placement in an inclusive classroom, the classroom may not be successful. Pre-service training is partially responsible for the attitudes and confidence of teachers in an inclusive classroom.

Questions seven through 12 address the teachers' feelings about professional development.

Data Synthesis

Transcendental phenomenology was used in the data analysis. The researcher may rely on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a visual of the experience and use systematic methods of analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Alfred Schutz is a phenomenologist who has contributed the most on how to apply insights on phenomenological philosophy in human and social sciences (Gros, 2017). Transcendental phenomenology allows the researcher to put aside prejudgments relating to the phenomenon being researched.

Another part of the data analysis is collecting data from several people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data analysis is performed by reducing the information to significant statements and combining the statements into themes. In bracketing, researchers can put aside experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon that is being investigated.

Data analysis refers to a wide set of methods to analyze the evolution of a phenomenon over time (Aldahdouh, 2018). Moustakas embraced the common features of human science research, including the value of qualitative research (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The focus is on the wholeness of experience, a search for experiences, and viewing experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of the subject.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and included as part of the research. After completing all recorded interviews, the researcher reviewed the information for any possible mistakes, including member checking. Participant names were not included in the transcription.

The information from all teachers was compared and evaluated. The questionnaires were reviewed for consistent information, as well as information that can be utilized to help with pre-service training. All recorded focus groups were reviewed and transcribed for information review. Although data analysis is essential to the research, the participant must rely on the trustworthiness of the researcher.

Trustworthiness

There are four criteria in the approach to trustworthiness in qualitative research. The criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). In qualitative research, researchers build their trust in the events as they are discovered. Concrete research practices produce trust, as well as trustworthiness when they are executed.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the views of the participant and the interpretation of the data by the researcher (Cope, 2014). Interpretation is enhanced by the researcher, describing their experiences, and verifying the research findings with the participants. A qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are recognized by people who share the same experience. Utilizing credible information is needed in research because information that is not credible could skew the research data. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality. Credibility depends on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher. Mackiewicz et al. (2016) explained that credibility breaks the construct into two main parts, trustworthiness and expertise. Honesty and belief in truthfulness are essential to this part of the research. Triangulation of data sources and methods are used to establish credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation was used because it utilizes several methods of data sources to understand

the phenomenon. Carter, et al (2014) state that triangulation uses several methods to develop the understanding of phenomena in qualitative research. Triangulation has also been used to test research validity through the collection of information from different sources.

Transferability

Transferability refers to findings that can be applied to other groups (Cope, 2014). It has met its criterion if the results have meaning to individuals not participating in the study, and readers can relate the result to their own experiences. Transferability is another aspect of qualitative research that should be considered; it refers to the possibility that what was found in one context applies to another context. Transferability can vary by the frequency, intensity, time, and type of activities that are performed (Lai, et al., 2020). Prolonged engagement requires that the researcher spends time with the participants.

Dependability

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which can be demonstrated through an effective description of the procedures undertaken for the study. Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions. A research study is deemed dependable if the findings can be replicated with similar participants in similar conditions. Dependability and confirmability are similar to reliability in quantitative studies, dealing with consistency, which is addressed through the provision of rich detail about the context and setting of the study. Member checking is recommended as a means of enhancing qualitative research because credibility is needed in the accurate descriptions of phenomena (Birt, et al., 2016). Member checking provides validation to help improve accuracy, credibility, and validity.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents, with no researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or personal opinions (Cope, 2014). The researcher demonstrates confirmability by describing how conclusions were established and ensuring that the findings were taken directly from the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were discussed, such as obtaining informed consent from participants, informing participants of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time, including the confidentiality of the site and participants (e.g., use of site and participant pseudonyms) and discussing how both physical and electronic data will be secured and the length of storage. Ethical considerations are more stringent when using children as a part of your research than it is for adults to protect the more vulnerable group (Matsui, et al., 2021). Research includes the use of humans themselves, information from humans for research purposes, and the intellectual work derived from these sources. All recorded interviews were securely stored in a password-protected device, separate from my personal computer. All confidential questionnaires were stored safely on a locked and password-protected computer without public access. This is essential because interviews and focus groups were conducted via Zoom or other video conferencing platforms. Participant pseudonyms must be used to allow for the complete honesty of the participants. Informed consent was obtained via electronic form and stored in a private digital file. Both the electronic consent form and all video

conference recordings were saved and secured for one year. Once this time has expired, all files will be deleted from computer storage, and any additional methods used to store the information (thumb drives, disc, informed consent, voluntary nature of the study).

Summary

The chapter examined the methodology of qualitative research study to review pre-service training for teachers of students with multiple learning disabilities. The goal of the study was to determine the effectiveness of pre-service training when preparing teachers for an inclusive classroom. Participants shared their thoughts and ideas on how to be an effective leader in an inclusive classroom. Participants shared their ideas on positive changes that could be made to increase student participation. The primary goal was to detail the research methods used to address the stated problem. The chapter addressed the procedures used, data collection tools, interview questions, and the participants. Trustworthiness and ethical concerns were addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to examine teacher pre-service training for teachers when helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The phenomenological study reviewed teacher training when helping students with MLD. To better understand the research participants' experiences, the central research question, "How do teachers feel about how they are prepared to teach students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting?" was used to direct the research study. The chapter provides the data analysis overall findings, provided by the participants' questionnaires and interviews. The chapter also includes all of the participant's responses and quotes with a table and narrative description for each participant. This will be followed by the results section which will provide a detailed analysis to explain themes supported by the participants' quoted information. Responses to the research questions based on the information obtained from the participants are provided along with the chapter summary.

Participants

To review how pre-service training impacts teacher interactions with students with MLD, 12 participants who met the selection criteria agreed to participate in the study. The research participants were K-12 teachers with at least one year of teaching experience in the classroom when helping students with MLD. Teacher participants were able to provide both recent and past pre-service training experiences to see if there were any differences in training over the years. The information the participants provided helped with both recent and extended past data to support the purpose of the study. Purposeful sampling was used to identify and select individual research participants who had knowledge and experience with pre-service training and teaching

in an inclusive classroom. The participants' confidentiality is protected using pseudonyms. Table 1 includes the demographic data of participants.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Becky	11	Masters	Chemistry, Biology	11 th – 12 th
Laura	13	Bachelors	Drama, Musical Theater	9 th – 12 th
Jessica	9	Masters	American Sign Language	9 th - 12 th
Delores	23	Bachelors	Chorus, Drama	9 th – 12 th
Judy	20	Masters	Special Education	2 nd
Carol	3	Bachelors	Reading/ELA, Math	4 th – 5 th
Myra	18	Masters	Life Science	7 th
Bruce	2	Bachelors	Chorus, Drama	9 th – 12 th
Edna	30	Masters	English, Lang. Arts	9 th , 11 th
Elizabeth	6	Specialist	General Education	Pre-K, 3 rd
Katie	6	Bachelors	All Subjects	2 nd
Gail	28	Specialist	Math, Science, Soc Stud	3 rd

Note: All names used in this study represent pseudonyms

Becky

Becky is a 42-year-old chemistry and biology teacher at a high school in Georgia who has been teaching for 11 years. She has a biology degree and is certified in biology and chemistry, but teaching anatomy and physiology is her favorite. She also has a master's degree in secondary education. Becky said that she was a late bloomer because she did not start in the field of teaching until she was 31 years old. Becky said she has been a nerd her whole life and when she started college, she wanted to be a physical therapist. At her previous school, she taught genetics and robotics.

Laura

Laura is a 51-year-old drama and musical theater teacher with a bachelor's degree and has been teaching for 13 years. She has been teaching in Georgia schools for 5 years. She took a break from teaching after she got married because her husband was in the Air Force and they lived in Germany for 3 years. She started back teaching when they moved to Arizona and she taught there for 7 years. During this time, she taught English and worked on the Title I writing lab.

Jessica

Jessica is a 37-year-old American Sign Language teacher and she has been teaching for 9 years. She has a master's degree in teaching - Special Education General Curriculum. Jessica teaches American Sign Language in the foreign language department, and she co-teaches English as the special education teacher. She was an interpreter for the deaf for 7 years before working in the public school system. Jessica was homeschooled from kindergarten to 6th grade and their mom encouraged them to explore and figure things out on their own. Everything was a learning opportunity, so education was ingrained in her and her siblings.

Delores

Delores is a 43-year-old Chorus and Drama teacher for grades 9-12 and has been teaching for 23 years. She has a bachelor's degree in music education and teaches chorus, drama, and music theater. Delores has had 4 years of educational and music training. She has learned to play all of the instruments, recitals, and instrument proficiency tests.

Judy

Judy is a 45-year-old 2nd-grade special education teacher who also does English Language Arts reading and math. She has a master's degree in early elementary education. She realized she wanted to be a teacher in her 2nd year of college. Judy's sister is also a teacher in high school as well as an assistant principal.

Carol

Carol is a 45-year-old teacher who co-teaches reading/English language arts for 4th grade and math for 5th grade. She has a bachelor's degree in special education and will be graduating with her master's degree in December 2023. Carol also teaches a social skills class in a small group setting for 6 students. She started working at her current school as a paraprofessional in the special education department in the autism department and when a position became available, she took it.

Myra

Myra is a 48-year-old teacher who teaches life science to 7th graders. She has been teaching for 26 years, except for a few years when she taught only part-time to raise her children. She has a master's degree in education: biological sciences 8-12. Myra has a bachelor's degree in elementary education K-6 from Brigham Young University. After high school, she went to college majoring in dance education with a physical education minor, but when she was a junior

in college, she changed her major to elementary education. At one point, she studied to be a football officiator but figured out that wasn't for her.

Bruce

Bruce is a 24-year-old teacher for 9th through 12th grade students. He has a bachelor's degree in music education. He teaches in the chorus and drama department and is the Director of choral activities. He has been teaching for 2 years. Bruce completed the questionnaire but did not participate in the one-on-one interview or focus group.

Edna

Edna is a 55-year-old teacher with a master's degree in early childhood education. She has been teaching for 30 years. She currently teaches English and language arts to 9th and 11th-grade students. Edna is also a co-teacher serving as a reading interventionist.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a 29-year-old teacher with a specialist degree in education. This is her 6th year teaching and is currently teaching pre-k in the school system, before this, she taught 3rd grade. She has always worked with children because her parents were children's church pastors. She started college in the nursing field to make more money, but after the first semester she realized it was not for her, so she changed her major to education.

Katie

Katie is a 28-year-old 2nd-grade teacher who teaches all subjects including reading, math, science, and social studies. This is her sixth year teaching. She has a bachelor's degree but is currently working on her master's degree. Katie graduated from the elementary school that she currently teaches at and her favorite teacher is still teaching. The teacher that influenced her to become a teacher is now her co-worker.

Gail

Gail is a 52-year-old teacher who has been teaching for 28 years. She currently teaches 3rd-grade math and science. She wanted to become a teacher because she struggled with test-taking in school, but her 10th-grade chemistry teacher helped her through her struggle. This created a passion in her to want to help other students like she was helped. She graduated from high school and went straight into college for education.

Results

The questions allowed teachers with at least one year of teaching experience in the classroom and experience with students with disabilities the opportunity to share their pre-service training experience. The findings of the study are organized based on the pre-determined research questions. The data analysis process included bracketing and organizing the themes into structural descriptions. The themes were developed from the data gathered from questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group.

Theme Development

Once data collection was completed, the transcriptions and written questionnaire responses were reviewed several times to become familiar with the nature of the responses. All recorded interviews and the focus group were transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes through horizontalization. After reviewing all the data collected, I pinpointed recurring statements from the participants. The information was carefully reviewed to identify recurring themes within the interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Recurring themes were identified through coding by interpreting the responses provided for each question. I initially identified ten themes, but upon further review of the identified themes, I was able to consolidate the information into five themes. I did this by reading through the information and identifying

patterns of significant statements from the data. Identifying significant patterns was achieved with the help of hermeneutic phenomenology analysis which involves searching for an understanding of the human experience through written text (Creswell, 2007). I separated each statement by color to identify recurring themes that tied together based on the subject matter. Across all data collection methods, all participants shared their personal feelings and experiences for the following themes: a) teacher feelings about teaching their MLD students, b) pre-service training, c) On-the-job learning, d) continuing education, and e) classroom assistance in inclusive classrooms. The themes are discussed in more detail in the next sections. Table 2 includes the keywords and phrases from which the themes were derived.

Table 2

Theme Development

Theme 1: Teacher Feelings About Teaching Their MLD Students

Relationships, keeping in touch even after graduation, a heart for kids, meeting everyone's needs, treat everyone equally, I love it, I enjoy working in this environment, I enjoy teaching these children, I feel energized and passionate when teaching, I know they can do it, make sure you make all accommodations.

Theme 2: Pre-service Training Experience

I can't say that I had any specific pre-service training, I had a class about inclusive classrooms, I don't really think I received any formal preparation, classroom observations, I had a class on differentiation techniques and strategies, not a lot of training prior to starting, I started at a disadvantage.

Theme 3: On-the-Job Learning

I don't think anything in education really prepares you like real life does, experience was the only way I learned to work and teach students, I've learned to make everything accessible in multiple different ways, what I've learned I learned on my own, I pretty much had to teach myself, I didn't have a lot of class to learn from.

Theme 4: Professional Development

My school puts together an instructional fair once a year during in-service, quarterly, updated courses online, two required twice a year, choose your desired topic, optional every Wednesday, continuing education 8-10 times per year, every year we meet we meet based on team levels.

Theme 5: Teacher Assistance with Inclusive Classrooms

Half semester under mentor, two teachers in the classroom, co-teachers in collaborative atmosphere, direct trainers, facilitator comes once a month, small group team of teachers, special education team to manage and strategize to meet students' needs.

Theme 1: Teacher Feelings About Teaching Their MLD Students

Most of the teachers who participated in the study expressed that they greatly care about their learning-disabled students and the students are the reason they continue in this field. For example, Myra shared that she went to the store and saw two former students who really stressed her out when they were in her classroom, but now they are high school students. She also shared how the meeting almost made her cry because they were “goofballs” in class, but now they’re doing really well and becoming the men that she always knew they could be. Judy said, “I enjoy teaching those children. I really enjoy the autistic children; I think they’re fun and interesting. ADHD gets difficult sometimes, so I try to find tools that help them concentrate a little better.”

Although the teacher participants expressed a love for their students and most of them said they would remain in their inclusive classrooms if given the opportunity to change, there were a few issues they had. Becky stated, “I don’t mind having an inclusive classroom, but I would prefer that the range be more limited. Having students who struggle a lot mixed with exceptional learning students, I don’t feel like I can ever meet the needs of such a diverse group of students. Either I leave some behind really struggling or I am not challenging others, and they get bored.” Laura also explained that the most difficult part of teaching in an inclusive classroom is making sure you make all the accommodations for all students.

Laura explained that teacher preparedness and training were very important for students with disabilities because “you have to have an understanding because sometimes the learning disability just looks like a behavioral problem. So, having the information about what you’re dealing with can help you to figure out how to help them.” Katie said that you should, “try to put yourself in the kids' shoes and know that everyone is coming from different backgrounds, places and lifestyles. You really have to focus on each child as an individual and know what they need from me or what I can do to be the best for them.”

Table 3

Teacher Feelings About Teaching Their MLD Students

Pseudonym	Years Teaching	Teaching MLD Students
Becky	12	I focus on relationship
		Laura 13
		Sometimes it is easy to forget they have learning disabilities because they are doing something they love
Jessica	9	I enjoy working with students with different learning styles, abilities, personalities and interests. I think each bring value to my classroom
Delores	23	It is very rewarding for me and for the students
Judy	20	I enjoy working in this environment
Carol	3	I serve very hard-working students who are

		determined and driven to progress in their education, no matter their deficiencies
Myra	18	We love education and if we love it, they'll know that our hearts are in it
Bruce	2	These students have been willing to work in my classroom, but have struggled with comparing themselves to other students in the room
Edna	30	It is a good feeling to be able to help them understand or finish an assignment that they may have been struggling with
Elizabeth	6	I always want to give the child what they need, but there are times where we're butting heads
Katie	6	Just being able to take each individual child and figuring out what they need
Gail	28	You have to get to know their personalities and what works and what doesn't

Theme 2: Pre-service Training Experience

Many of the participants had similar experiences which included minimal pre-service training for their inclusive classrooms. Becky stated that she graduated from a residency program where they spent a year in a classroom with a mentor teacher, but other than that, she did not have any specific training. Becky said, "in the program that I was in, we had a particular class

about inclusion. I don't know how much we learned about how to put lessons together, but they didn't really show you how to do it. It was not helpful, but at least we did learn about the IEPs. Laura said that the only pre-service training she received was a special education course. While she was in college, she did 40 hours of classroom observations that were required for her different college courses.

Jessica shared that there was not a lot of pre-service training prior to starting teaching. She started on a provisional license because she already had a degree in special education, so throughout the first year of teaching she had to take a lot of classes on how to correctly write IEPs and what the different disabilities and classifications were along with how to address them in the classroom. Delores said that she took a course on how to teach students with disabilities, but there was no focus on inclusive classrooms. Delores also shared, "I don't feel I was adequately prepared for a student who had disabilities or several students that had disabilities and different kinds of disabilities and how to engage in the same setting."

When Judy was asked about her pre-service training, she stated, "we just had one class in college. I think there should definitely be more because there are so many, especially at the school I'm at. I actually went back and studied and got my certification in special education. I pretty much had to teach myself." Myra said, "I had one semester in the classroom under a mentor and then here's your 36 children, go for it."

Bruce stated that he did not receive any training for teaching students with multiple learning disabilities. He also said that he was trained in college briefly on the inclusion of learning disabilities in the classroom, but his school never provided training. Edna explained that during her undergraduate work, she had at least two classes that focused on procedures and protocols for teaching students with learning disabilities as well as laws regarding their

education. She said that during her post-graduate studies there was a lot of focus on multiple learning styles and methodology for teaching students who need alternate strategies in order to be successful in the classroom.

Carol, who has been teaching for three years, had several pre-service training tools. The pre-service training tools included *Mindset*, a program that focuses on de-escalation, *Kagan*, a learning engagement program, and *Digging Deeper*, a professional development program for special education teachers. Elizabeth explained that in her college education program they were required to have several hours of student teaching and create a portfolio where they were leading and developing lessons. As far as pre-service training, she said, “there wasn’t any trainings before, I interviewed, and they asked if I could start and I started.”

Katie explained that during her college courses she would pick her own times to do observation hours. During this time, she would observe and help out some. Following this, she did a year of student teaching in a second-grade classroom. When Gail was asked if she received pre-service training for students with learning disabilities, she said that she only had to take a semester of pre-service training.

Table 4

Pre-service Training Experience			
Pseudonym	No	Yes	What?
Becky	X		
Laura	X		
Jessica	X		
Delores		X	One class on teaching Students with disabilities

Judy		X	One class
Carol		X	Mindset, Kagan, Digging Deeper
Myra	X		
Bruce	X		
Edna		X	Two classes on teaching students with disabilities and laws
Elizabeth		X	
Katie	X		
Gail		X	

Theme 3: On-the-job Learning

Some of the participants stated that they did a lot of learning on the job. Becky said during the focus group that, “the most I’ve learned is just by being in the classroom. Once I was in the classroom then I had to actually experience reading the IEPs and how to incorporate some of those accommodations and modifications. It was just learning by doing and then asking for help finding it.” Elizabeth said, “Once I got into my own classroom, I just adopted what was already in place when I started, but it was really hard to know how to navigate and how to support those students.

Jessica feels that children are very individual and have individual needs, so experience was the only way she learned to work and teach students. She feels that she has no one to help her and she has learned how to make everything accessible in multiple different ways. Delores

said, “I don’t feel I was adequately prepared for a student who had disabilities. I feel like what I have learned, I have learned on my own.”

Judy felt like she had to teach herself. She said, “As a general education teacher, I had the resource class sometimes and I had co-teach sometimes, so I learned a lot from that, but without those experiences I didn’t have a lot of actual class training to learn from.” Myra said that on-the-job training and help from co-workers was how she learned how to handle students with learning disabilities. Gail felt what prepared her the most was just being on the “battlefield” with the kids.

Edna said she is not sure if any pre-service training could fully prepare anyone for teaching students with multiple learning disabilities. Edna said, “Until your feet hit the ground in an actual classroom with students, it is hard to know exactly what to expect.” She said that she was given some strategies and techniques by her school to use with students, but they don’t always consider the personalities of students and other factors that go into teaching each day. In many cases, Edna says, “I won’t know what will work best until I’ve adequately tried different strategies.”

Theme 4: Professional Development

Professional development is important in the continuous training, education, and development of teachers. The requirement varies based on certain criteria. Becky said that her school puts together an instructional fair once a year during teacher in-service. Becky said, “They have their own agenda on that, it’s not about helping you in the classroom necessarily, it’s more about, ‘Here’s the new standard’.”

Laura said her professional development is required quarterly. She left teaching for a period of time and when she came back, she was required to do professional development which

included taking a special education course as well as a dyslexia course online. Jessica said that when she first started teaching, she had to take 12 professional development courses (6-8 hours each) that specialized in writing IEPs and accommodating students in the classroom with specific strategies targeted at different types of disabilities. Currently, she is required to complete 3-4 hours of professional development courses annually.

Delores receives some of her professional development yearly at the Georgia Music Educators Association Conference. She said that she is not sure how many hours are required because they have someone to keep track of their professional development hours for them. They receive some hours during in-service meetings, and she attends music education classes that also provide professional development hours. Judy receives professional development three times per year but is not sure how many hours are required.

Carol said that she receives professional development 8-10 times per year. At least four times per year her specification department holds training specifically for teaching children with disabilities and how to address their needs in the classroom. Outside of this, she also receives one-on-one training with their facilitator on the laws, procedures, and how to strategize in the classroom. Myra said that every year they are required to do Professional Learning Community where they meet in groups according to team levels. So, they have several hours built into their meetings and professional learning community.

Bruce, who has been teaching for two years, said that he has not received “real continuing education so far.” Edna said that she is not currently participating in any professional development. Last year, she participated in two different professional development courses for educators. She said that during her teaching experience, there have been many training

workshops and classes throughout the years that focused on requirements for meeting the needs of students with multiple learning disabilities.

Elizabeth takes one or two training courses every year. Before COVID, they would have to drive to in-person professional development training courses, sometimes two days. After COVID, it was online via Zoom, now it is all pre-recorded, so you can watch it at your convenience. They are required to complete the pre-recorded training and then there are usually activities to complete as well. These activities consist of documenting how the teacher used the information in the training, in the classroom.

Katie shared that they have one to two professional development trainings annually. Also, over the last two years, they have had to participate in “letters” professional development. Letters are required and are essentially the science of reading. It was an 88-unit program that teaches how your brain is wired to learn how to read and that reading is not instinctive, you must be taught to read. Gail said that she is required to meet with her academic coach every Thursday to get her Professional Learning Units and she is required to complete five per year.

Table 5

Professional Development	
Pseudonym	Requirement
Becky	Once per year during In-service
Laura	Quarterly
Jessica	Annually, 3-4 hours
Delores	Annually, not sure of the required number of hours
Judy	Three times annually
Carol	8-10 times annually

Myra	Annually, not sure required number of hours
Bruce	None
Edna	Two per year
Elizabeth	One to two pre-recorded trainings annually
Katie	One to two annually
Gail	Five annually

Theme 5: Teacher Assistance with Inclusive Classroom

In inclusive classrooms, teachers will sometimes have assistance from a co-teacher which can be beneficial for the student and the teacher. Becky said that when she first started teaching 12 years ago, she was not assigned a mentor, she found one on her own. Now, she has help in the classroom. She stated, “Having a co-teacher is so helpful. We can work together to help students individually and spend more one-on-one time with them.” Laura also said that when she first started teaching, she didn’t have a co-teacher. She said that she taught freshmen in a large school and her co-workers were very seasoned, tenured teachers who, “weren’t helping the new kid.” She said she was on her own and had to, “think on my feet to learn what would work for the kids I had.” Laura said, “The more support a new teacher can get from those that have been there, done that, the better and less likely they are to get discouraged and quit”.

Jessica said that she meets with each case manager of her students to discuss needs. Every year they have a special education meeting to come together to discuss specific information. When she first started, she would bring her caseload and they would work through it with her until she figured out how to do it on her own. Now, her classroom has two teachers and they can focus on different things and have the students in small groups. Having two teachers allows her to focus on their individual needs and how she can best help them.

Judy shared that when she started, she was team teaching with a veteran teacher, so it made it a little easier for her. She said that the classroom did have several students with behavioral issues, but her co-teacher knew how to manage those issues and helped her. She was in a team teaching classroom for three years. Carol said that she has an amazing general education department and special education team who work collaboratively to manage and strategize to meet student needs. According to Carol, the school counselor and administration strive to create an atmosphere with a balance of second chances and accountability for behavior, school attendance, and grades which supports all teachers.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to understand teacher pre-service training for teachers at Northwest Georgia schools when helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The study was designed to answer a central research question. The questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups were used in an attempt to answer the research questions and three sub-questions. The data obtained from participants was used to answer each of the research questions below.

Central Research Question

The central question that guided the research study was: How do teachers feel they are prepared to teach students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting? The participants' perspective is that working with students with multiple learning disabilities is both rewarding and frustrating at the same time. Becky said, "The regular learning and high achieving students sometimes neglected to deal with the learning-disabled students' discipline and learning issues." Becky said, "The most difficult part of teaching in an inclusive classroom is having students who struggle a lot mixed in with exceptional learning students. Either I leave

some behind and really struggling or I am challenging some others and they get bored. I end up teaching to the middle and I hate that.”

Laura said, “I just have a heart for kids and probably just having some baseline for trying to at least meet everyone’s needs but also have the appearance of treating everyone equally would be helpful. Teacher preparedness and training is crucial for teaching students with disabilities, you have to have an understanding.” Jessica has learned that, “there are students who complete tasks within minutes, while others may take a half hour. Finding activities for higher and lower students that keep all students engaged and on the same task can be difficult.” Most teacher participants agreed that it is difficult to teach both regular learners and learning-disabled students together in the same classroom.

As a result of the inclusive classroom and a lack of pre-service training, the teacher participants shared that either the regular learners succeed and the learning disabled suffer or vice versa. Through their years of experience, they have witnessed the regular learners become frustrated and the LD students feel inferior because it is difficult to provide every student with exactly what they need. The teacher participants explained that some students have multiple IEPs and accommodation requirements, and it is difficult to keep up with all of what each student requires. Each participant who expressed a lack of pre-service training also noted a love for the students, but a need for help in the inclusive environment. The teachers who received the most pre-service training and classroom assistance expressed minimal classroom issues.

Sub-Question One

How do current teachers describe the tools they are provided with during pre-service training to prepare them to teach students with multiple learning disabilities? Jessica said, “Although I think I received training for how to work with children who have individual

disabilities, I'm not sure I was taught how to teach in the classroom for students with multiple disabilities." Delores said, "I took a course on students with disabilities in my general education curriculum. Focusing on an inclusive classroom was never really addressed." Four out of 12 participants said they received pre-service training and only one of those participants had more than one or two classes.

Sub-Question Two

How does teacher preparedness influence the reactions to students with learning disabilities? Judy shared, "If you don't feel prepared, you feel like you're doing a disservice to that kid. The more prepared you are, the more tools you can come up with to help them learn and not be disruptive or not feel like a failure themselves. You really want to have those tools to help them create that love of learning so that they don't go through their whole school career hating it." Becky shared that she felt overwhelmed with just the sheer content of the class and was not prepared to teach a class of students with MLD. Carol, who received the most pre-service training, said that she feels energized and passionate when she's teaching, giving information, and showing strategy. "Having my students come into mastery of a skill is a passion for me." The teacher participants agreed that if they received more training, it would influence their reactions in the classroom more positively.

Sub-Question Three

What methods are provided for field experience and student teaching to prepare teachers in the classroom for students with multiple learning disabilities? Myra said that she had the opportunity to do an internship out of state while she was still in school, but it was not specifically for students with MLD. Elizabeth shared that while she was completing her education program, she was required to complete a specific number of student teaching hours

(she could not remember how many) and create a portfolio where she created mock lessons. Again, not specifically for students with MLD. Katie had several courses where she would just do observation hours and then she had a year of student teaching. She stated that when the school required observation hours, they never specified that you had to be in an inclusion classroom. Carol, the teacher with the most pre-service training and assistance, stated that before going into the classroom, she worked as a paraprofessional in a classroom for learning-disabled students. She was able to co-teach with a lead teacher and she was responsible for making sure that their IEP was followed. She assisted with support for managing behavior, managing assignments, organizing, and accommodations and modifications they needed. The teacher participants agreed that they were required to participate in classroom observations and obtain student teaching hours, but they did not have to complete these requirements specifically for a classroom with MLD students.

Summary

Chapter Four presented descriptive information of 12 participants, the results of data analysis, and identified themes. The data was analyzed from questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group and the information revealed five themes: Teacher feelings about teaching their MLD students, pre-service training experience, on-the-job learning, professional development, and teacher assistance with inclusive classrooms. The themes answered the central question of, How do teachers feel they are prepared to teach students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting. The themes also answered the three sub-questions a) How do current teachers describe the tools they are provided with during pre-service training to prepare them to teach students with multiple learning disabilities? b) How does teacher preparedness influence the reactions to students with learning disabilities? c) What methods are provided for field

experience and student teaching to prepare teachers in the classroom for students with multiple learning disabilities? The research revealed that the majority of the participants did not receive pre-service training. For the participants that did receive pre-service training, it was not targeted towards students with MLD.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to understand teacher pre-service training for teachers at Northwest Georgia schools when helping students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. A group of 12 K-12 teachers participated in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an explanation of the research findings that were essential in detailing the lived experiences of pre-service teachers. Chapter Five consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The research study sought to answer a central research question and three sub-questions that centered around the pre-service experiences of K-12 teachers in preparing them to teach students with disabilities. Data collection included a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group. The data analysis presented themes that provided insight into the lived experiences of pre-service teachers.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Five themes developed from the data analysis process. These themes included 1) teacher feelings about teaching their MLD students, 2) pre-service training experience, 3) on-the-job learning, 4) professional development, and 5) teacher assistance with inclusive classrooms. The themes were very important to understanding the teacher participants' lived experiences. The participants explained that due to a lack of pre-service training, they did not feel they were properly prepared to teach students with MLD. They also explained that most of the methods

they currently use to teach students with MLD, they learned through on-the-job learning. Teachers described the thoughts of feeling they were doing their students a disservice because they were placed in a classroom without really knowing how to manage the MLD students. The one teacher who felt she received proper pre-service training and in-class assistance relayed positive experiences in the classroom and with the students. She felt that she was given everything she needed to succeed in the classroom and with the students.

Interpretation of Findings

Twelve K-12 teachers whose teaching experience ranged from two years to 30 years participated in the study. Nine of the 12 participants completed a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions. Ten of the 12 teachers participated in a Zoom interview consisting of 25 questions. Three of the 12 teachers participated in a Zoom focus group consisting of 12 questions. All questions were related to the central research questions and the sub-questions. The central research question that guided this study was: How do teachers feel they are prepared to teach students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting?

An analysis of the data showed that teachers had very little, if any, pre-service training and they directly correlated a lack of pre-service training with feelings of classroom inadequacy when teaching students with MLD. A lack of confidence to lead an inclusive classroom could be the result of a lack of teacher pre-service training (Barow & Ostlund, 2019). Teachers also discussed when they don't feel prepared, they feel like they are doing a disservice to the students. Teacher efficacy is the belief of the teacher's own capabilities to produce specific outcomes of student learning, even with students that may be difficult learners (Wang, et al., 2017). The belief in their own capabilities can shape their own performance because a teacher's self-efficacy is an important factor for their improvement, as well as student motivation, engagement, and

achievement (Gumus & Bellibas 2021). Teacher education and training are valuable in promoting a positive attitude towards inclusion, creating a need to prepare teachers who are capable and dedicated (Bentley-Williams, et al, 2017).

Teacher professional development (TPD) is responsible for finding out what works and what does not work to develop teachers so that all students have access to high quality classroom instruction (Svendsen, 2020). TPD is considered life-long learning for teachers and is an on-going process by which teachers continue to grow for their students. Effective TPD will include critical reflection with others who share the same experiences and will actively engage teachers in a professional learning environment to increase their professional knowledge and student learning. At least 9 of the participants stated that much of the professional development they are required to participate in is not useful. They felt it was just something that checks a box but does not provide you with useful tools. The effectiveness of inclusive learning can be influenced by the quality of professional development that is made available to all members of the education field (Waitoller, et al., 2016). Jackson et al. (2020) stated that effective instructional design should include the understanding and anticipation of the learning needs of the student. To do this, teachers must receive constant professional growth, along with refining their goals and objectives for faculty learning. Finally, 11 of the 12 participants stated that what they have learned and the tools they have used have been self-taught or on-the-job learning. Teachers learned to teach by adapting their existing instructional practices to be more effective and desirable (Kusch, 2016). This would include not only specific lesson content, structure, and processes, but also goals and measurable objectives.

Additional Pre-Training

The interviews revealed that many of the teacher participants felt that if they had received more hands-on pre-service training, it would have better prepared them for their new inclusive classroom. Studies have shown that teacher support directly and positively affects motivation and self-efficacy over time, which positively impacts academic performance (Affuso, et al., 2022). This is also evidenced in the way that teachers learn and grow as instructors. Laura explained that maybe if she were able to mentor a special education teacher, it could have better prepared her for a classroom with MLD students. She said, “If I had some actual interaction with the special ed teacher to really talk about this because these cases can be so individualized. I think more communication or maybe even an actual class taught by a special ed teacher can give you a more realistic setting of what it’s like. Mentor teachers in conjunction with professional development helps the teacher to build a better classroom (Clark, 2021). Just like everything, learning factual information and then being able to apply it in a real-world setting would be beneficial.” A teacher’s motivation to implement what they have learned through professional development is influenced by both internal factors (teacher beliefs, attitudes) and external factors (school/district policies, curriculum constraints, and other professional development programs) (Osman & Warner, 2020). This shows that to improve the skills of teachers there needs to be a combination of motivation, appropriate leadership style, and a development of teachers’ skills to enhance teaching activities in schools.

Many of the participants agreed that the more tools they would have been given initially, the more prepared they would have felt going into their classroom. Judy said, “The more tools you can come with to help them (students) learn and not be disruptive or not feel like a failure themselves the better. I feel that teacher mentors would be very beneficial.” Myra believed that before a teacher enters the classroom, it would be beneficial for a new teacher to shadow a

veteran teacher in the classroom where they have a lot of different learning styles in their classroom for a solid few weeks. This is so that they can see how the teacher interacts with students and deals with situations that arise. Providing mentoring programs for all teachers entering schools can affect the overall success and retention of excited new educators (Mallette, et al., 2020). The implementation of mentorship models in teacher education has not been coordinated adequately and has not had standard guidelines in public schools.

Elizabeth felt that before going into the classroom, it would have been useful to know classroom management strategies because the typical, regular education strategies do not work for all learners. Educational settings can be affected by behavioral and academic problems generated by ADHD students (Gaastra, et al., 2020). Elizabeth said it would have also been useful to learn how to manage behaviors when there are outbursts, frustrations, and meltdowns and differentiate their needs in general. Classroom Management Strategies are scientifically proven to be effective and are important for educational policies in inclusive classrooms to contribute to the improvement of teacher support and training (Gaastra, et al., 2020). Research has shown that many CMSs improve the educational functioning of students with MLD. It is recommended that only teachers who have received proper training on ADHD and its management should provide behavioral and classroom intervention, but it has been found that teacher training specific to ADHD interventions is lacking (Moore, et al., 2017). Gail wished she would have had more of a class on the different types of learning disabilities. She also said that sitting in on a class to observe a seasoned, special education teacher and then having a mentor as well that one can go to for advice would have been helpful.

Classrooms with Similar Skill Levels

Many of the teachers expressed concern with having such a broad skill level in each classroom. They felt that it would be better for them and the students if students with similar skill levels could be paired in classrooms. They felt that when, for example, one has gifted students in the same classroom as a student who greatly struggles, both students struggle. In the focus group, the teachers agreed that when they have some students who are quite low and struggle in a classroom mixed with exceptional students, they tend to “teach to the middle” because they can’t go too fast, or they’ll lose those kids. They felt one can’t challenge the students that need to be challenged because they will lose the rest of them. Becky said, “I wish they wouldn’t give you both ends of the spectrum in one class, that is a challenge for me. If I had them (students) where they had similar skill levels, I could go at a pace that would benefit everybody.”

Laura also stated, “I don’t mind having an inclusive classroom, but I would prefer if the range were more limited. It is easier when all of the students are closer to the same learning level because it’s easier to set a pace that is good for everyone.” Laura said, “The most challenging thing is when you have only part of the class who will easily focus, and then you have the students with learning disabilities. The other students are more intrinsically motivated to get the grade and they know they’re going to do well already, but then the students with learning disabilities tend to be less focused and that was the biggest challenge to manage all of that at the same time.” Jessica said that she enjoys working with students with different learning styles and she thinks that each student brings value to her classroom. She also said, “finding activities for higher and lower students that keep all students engaged and on the same task can be difficult.”

Implications for Policy or Practice

The data shows that participants agreed that prior to entering their classroom, it would have been beneficial for them to observe a veteran teacher in either a special education or

inclusive classroom setting. They felt that this would be beneficial for them, not only for just one class but for several weeks. They also believed that having an assigned mentor when they first started teaching would have been helpful. The mentor would be a veteran teacher that they could go to with questions, concerns, and suggestions for how to best help students. Mentor teachers in conjunction with professional development helps the teacher to build a better classroom (Clark, 2021). According to the participants, implementing this practice initially could have helped them be more prepared when they began teaching.

Inclusive education provides access to quality education for all students while considering their diverse needs (Aldabas, 2020). Inclusive education is when students with or without disabilities attend the same classes, learn together to achieve pre-determined results, and integrate into society. Although the teacher participants expressed a love for their students in inclusive classrooms, they stated that it would make it easier for them and the students if they divided the inclusive classrooms based on skill level. The participants explained that they not only have to find a way to teach the same lesson to different types of learners but also make sure that the students' accommodations and modifications are adhered to. As a result, this causes the regular learners to feel frustrated because they are required to wait for the class to catch up. It also causes the disabled learners to feel inadequate compared to their classmates. Higher order thinking skills distinguish different learning methods that require different amounts of cognitive processing (Lu, et al., 2021). Although instructing a classroom with minimal guidance might work for a solely regular learning classroom, it does not work for students with ADHD because of their inability to participate in inductive thinking. A one-size fits all learning design is not beneficial for students with ADHD, as the content needs to be designed to accommodate their needs.

Implications for Policy

The data supports the findings that teachers do not receive adequate pre-service training and it makes it challenging for new teachers to support students as effectively as needed.

Teachers report that their pre-service training did not properly prepare them to manage ADHD behaviors, and that these students can be more challenging to teach (Monteiro, et al., 2021).

Teachers as well as students in inclusive classrooms would be better served if they were prepared before entering the classroom. A teachers' experiences in the classroom can be affected by time, administrative support, and resources, but can also be affected by teacher knowledge, skills, and beliefs (Mikami, et al., 2019). The preparation could include a several-week-long classroom observation in a special education or inclusive classroom. Once the teacher completes this requirement, they will be assigned a veteran teacher as a mentor who will be available for assistance with the new teachers' inclusive classroom. Federal, state, and educational policies must be reviewed and changed to provide teachers with the tools needed to effectively lead an inclusive classroom.

Implications for Practice

It would be beneficial for teachers to receive additional training outside of higher education that focuses on MLDs and inclusive classroom instruction. Receiving additional training outside of higher education would be helpful because pre-service teachers could gain practicum experience before they take on the full range of responsibilities involved with teaching students with MLDs. It would also be beneficial for teachers to receive annual certification for teaching students with MLDs, writing IEPs, and facilitating inclusive classroom instruction. Annual certification would help teachers to stay current on the laws, processes, and procedures when working with students who have MLDs. It could also be beneficial to have a universal

requirement for a specific number of continuing education hours specifically focusing on teaching students with disabilities. A primary concern is that teachers receive classroom education to teach traditional learning students but are not equipped with the knowledge of how to teach students with MLDs. The lack of knowledge and skills in behavior management can result in the teacher's efforts being time-consuming and ineffective (Metzger & Hamilton, 2021). This puts the teacher at a disadvantage and causes frustration and burnout.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The study reveals both theoretical and empirical implications. The implications for each are explained in detail below. The theoretical implications are seen with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. Bandura's self-efficacy theory addresses the impact of factors on fundamental aspects (Ion, et al., 2022).

Empirical Implications

The transcendental phenomenological approach was used to capture the lived experiences of K-12 teachers who teach in an inclusive classroom environment. The common theme in the data collection process among participants was a lack of pre-service training and a feeling of being unprepared to teach in an inclusive classroom environment. Also, the participants expressed concern with all levels of students in the same classroom, instead of including students that are closer to the same academic level. This causes frustration with the exceptional students and feelings of inferiority toward the learning-disabled students.

Previous studies have focused on the lack of efficient pre-service training for teachers which can cause negative feelings towards students when entering an inclusive classroom (Karimova, et al, 2020; Monteiro, et al, 2021; Fenty & Brydon, 2017). The study confirmed the impact that a lack of proper pre-service training, specifically targeted toward students with

learning disabilities, can have on new teachers. The study also adds to the empirical literature on the impact that lack of pre-service training can have on teachers and students. The study extends research because it also adds the motivation teachers have to independently learn what methods they can use to help each student and suggestions for future teachers. The study adds new ideas for pre-service training as it relates to students with LD. The study explores ideas from teachers who teach in an inclusive classroom providing pre-service training suggestions. Nothing emerged when utilizing my chosen method.

The study sheds light on the topic because it provides new ideas from teaching professionals that may not have been discussed in the past. The participants had experience teaching in inclusive classrooms spanning from 1 year to over twenty years and the majority of them felt like they were self-taught and had great ideas of how to change the system. The study diverges from extant theory because although pre-service training has been delivered mostly in a classroom and does not focus on disabilities, the research provided new ideas to better assist new teachers.

Theoretical Implications

Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory says that a person's knowledge is directly related to observing others through experience. Observing others can form the professional aspirations that one wishes to achieve (Ion, et al, 2022). Bandura's social cognitive theory is considered to be both an outcome and a determining factor of academic achievement and is related to a teacher's aspiration to do well in the classroom and for their students. One way that academic achievement can be achieved is by being prepared before entering the classroom. As many of the teachers stated, they did not feel prepared to teach an inclusive classroom or students with disabilities because they felt they did not receive the proper training. Many of the

participants stated that observing the classroom of an experienced teacher could have provided them with more tools to utilize in the classroom. Bandura's self-efficacy is also based on a person's belief in their ability. Teachers stated that if they received the proper tools, they would be more confident in their ability as a teacher, especially to instruct students with multiple learning disabilities.

The study corroborates previous research in that studies indicated teacher education and training are valuable in preparing teachers for an inclusive classroom (Bentley-Williams, 2017). Teachers must develop the necessary skills for engaging students, including those with LD (Owiny, et al, 2019). If a teacher believes they can manage a classroom and maintain lesson plans, it is believed they will successfully lead the classroom (Karimova, et al, 2020). The participants agreed that if they had adequate pre-service training, especially for instructing students with MLD, they would have felt more comfortable and more prepared when entering the classroom and helping students. Also, the majority of the participants agreed that they were not provided adequate pre-service training to help with leading an inclusive classroom, so they felt they were doing the LD students an injustice in the beginning.

The study diverges from previous research in that previous research states that ongoing professional development can help relieve frustration because it provides teachers with tools to assist students (Hock, et al, 2017). Previous research also advised that professional development is responsible for finding out what works and does not work to develop teachers so that all students have access to high-quality classroom instruction (Svendsen, 2020). Also, previous research states that the effectiveness of inclusive learning can be influenced by the professional development that is made available (Waitoller, et al, 2016). The participants in the study agreed that the professional development that is required does not help them in the classroom and they

feel it is a waste of time. Many of the participants even stated that they felt their county professional development was just something to check off of a list, it was not beneficial for them at all. They feel like it could be beneficial if the county would be more diligent in selecting and implementing the professional development courses.

The study adds additional knowledge on teaching in an inclusive classroom, from the teacher's perspective. The participants provided information from both when they were just entering the classroom as well as their experiences currently. Many of the participants provided great ideas on how to improve pre-service training, ideas on how to assist new teachers as they enter into an inclusive classroom, and how to improve professional development courses and implementation of the information. There was nothing that emerged as a result of my method and design.

The study sheds light on the topic of pre-service training because it provides an understanding of the tools, or lack thereof, provided to teachers when entering into an inclusive classroom. Lack of pre-service training explains why teachers may not feel prepared to instruct a classroom that includes students with MLD and suggestions on how to improve the pre-service training in the future. The study diverges from extant theory in part because previous studies indicated that professional development was beneficial to teachers and provided benefits for the classroom. The study revealed that participants did not see the value, nor did it help them in their inclusive classroom.

Limitations and Delimitations

A summary of limitations and delimitations pertaining to the study is described below. The limitations did not significantly affect the study. The delimitations were intentionally chosen to align with the study's purpose.

Limitations

The timing of when data collection began could have been a limitation. School had just started when teachers were contacted to participate in the study, so many of them were not eager to participate. Many of the teachers advised that they were too busy to participate, or they could maybe complete a questionnaire, but that was all they could allot time for. Another limitation was that only teachers from one geographical area were participating. Based on this limitation, the number of participants was limited to 12.

Delimitations

The delimitations did not hurt the research. I was still able to gather valuable information about the experiences of the participants. Purposeful sampling was effectively used to recruit participants for the study. To participate in the study, participants were required to be a current teacher having completed all requirements to teach in the State of Georgia for at least one year, and have experience teaching children with disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

I would recommend that additional studies about pre-service training focus on how the benefits of training could improve teacher effectiveness. The study was focused on K-12 teacher perspectives and how pre-service training affected their initial classroom experience with students who had learning disabilities. The research outcome may change if there were more participants from each grade level. I recommend that additional studies be conducted that expand beyond Northwest Georgia. Conducting this study in a larger area may yield even more useful results. The study may also provide additional information if there was a larger group of diverse teachers. Also, collecting data during a different time of the year when teachers are not so overwhelmed with the start of the school year could possibly produce additional results. Lastly,

research the challenges and successes in preparing teachers for inclusive settings from the faculty member's perspective.

Conclusion

The transcendental phenomenological study focused on 12 K-12 teachers who detailed their experiences with pre-service training before teaching in the classroom. Self-efficacy was the theoretical framework for the study. Findings suggest that K-12 teachers feel they do not receive adequate pre-service training to handle a new inclusive classroom environment. The participants provided suggestions for helpful tools that could be beneficial for new teachers entering an inclusive classroom. Teacher participants reported that although inclusive classrooms are a positive method to use, there should be more thought put into how the students' academic levels are grouped.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

From: IRB, IRB <IRB@liberty.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2023, 1:59 PM
To: Hart, Tondra <[REDACTED]@liberty.edu>
Cc: [REDACTED] (Teaching Excellence) <[REDACTED]@liberty.edu>; IRB, IRB <IRB@liberty.edu>
Subject: IRB-FY23-24-169

Good Afternoon Tondra,

The IRB has determined that your study is exempt from IRB review, and you will receive a limited exemption notification shortly. Because your study is exempt from IRB review, the regulatory requirements regarding consent are not applicable, but per IRB policy, you must still provide study information to participants in the form of an information sheet. We have edited your consent form for this reason. Additionally, you are not required to obtain signed consent from your participants.

Needed edits were made to the attached documents, and we wanted to make you aware of the edits, but you do not need to return the documents to the IRB.

Please contact the IRB if you have any questions.

Thank you,

[REDACTED] Baker, Ph.D., CIP
Administrative Chair
Office of Research Ethics

[REDACTED]

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Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research

Title of the Project: A Qualitative Study: Teacher Feelings About How They Are Prepared To Teach Students With Multiple Learning Disabilities In An Inclusive Classroom Setting

Principal Investigator: Tondra Hart, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, 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 teacher that has completed all requirements to teach in the State of Georgia and are currently teaching in a classroom. You must also have at least one year of teaching experience in a classroom. 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.

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

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers and how pre-service training prepares them for an inclusive classroom, including students with multiple learning disabilities.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in completing a confidential questionnaire that should take less than 20 minutes.
2. Participate in a recorded Zoom interview that should take between 30-45 minutes.
3. Participate in a recorded Focus Group with other participants that should be between 1-1.5 hours

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 education and information. This study is expected to help improve pre-service training for teachers in an inclusive classroom. It will provide information about how teachers feel about the pre-service training they received and how it could be improved to better prepare them for an inclusive classroom.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating 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. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

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. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or 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 contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Tondra Hart. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (252) 312-3819 or thart66@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [Dr. \[redacted\] \[redacted\] at \[redacted\]@liberty.edu](mailto:Dr. [redacted] [redacted] at [redacted]@liberty.edu).

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[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Appendix C: Individual Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself (age, highest level of education, how long have you been a teacher in this county). (RQ1)
2. How long have you been a teacher? (RQ1)
3. What subject(s) do you teach? What grade level? (RQ1)
4. When did you realize that you wanted to be a teacher? (RQ1)
5. What influenced you to become a teacher? (RQ1)
6. After high school graduation, how long was it before you started your journey as a teacher? (RQ1)
7. Tell me about your general experiences in a classroom prior to completing teacher training. (RQ1)
8. What types of pre-service training were you provided with? Was it offered online or in-person? (RQ1)
9. What pre-service preparation and/or training did you receive to teach students with disabilities? (RQ1)
10. Please detail the different aspects of your training. What did the training include? (RQ1)
11. Explain how your training prepared you to work with students with multiple learning disabilities? (RQ2)
12. What, if any, part of the training was specific to teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? (RQ2)
13. What do you feel could have been included in pre-service training to better prepare you for an inclusive classroom? Why? (RQ2)

14. Please describe your experience in the classroom the first month after training. (RQ2)
15. Based on pre-service training, how do you feel you were prepared for this experience of teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? (RQ2)
16. Please describe your personal feelings when teaching children with multiple learning disabilities including students with ADHD in an inclusive classroom. (RQ2)
17. How do you feel that teacher preparedness and training could influence the teacher interactions with students with learning disabilities? (RQ2)
18. What requirements does your school have regarding on-going professional development courses? How often are you required to attend? (RQ2)
19. Please describe any on-going professional development courses you have participated in, if any. (RQ2)
20. How have the professional development courses helped you as a teacher? (RQ2)
21. How have the professional development courses helped you with your inclusive classroom? (RQ2)
22. Please describe any opportunities offered to you to participate in field experience prior to teaching in your inclusive classroom. (RQ3)
23. Please describe any student teaching opportunities that were made available to you prior to teaching in an inclusive classroom. (RQ3)
24. Were these opportunities beneficial to you as a teacher when teaching students with multiple learning disabilities? If so, why? (RQ3)
25. Looking back to your pre-service training, what would you change or add that could have better prepared you for an inclusive classroom? (RQ3)

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

- 1) What pre-service training did you receive?
- 2) What training was used, if any, to ensure that you were adequately prepared for an inclusive classroom?
- 3) What aspects of pre-service training did you find useful?
- 4) What aspects of pre-service training did not adequately prepare you for the classroom?
- 5) If you had the choice, what changes would you make to pre-service training?
- 6) What are the positive and negative aspects to teaching in an inclusive classroom?
- 7) What requirements does your school have for your participation in ongoing professional development courses? If any, how often?
- 8) Please describe any ongoing professional development courses you have participated in, if any.
- 9) How have the professional development courses helped you as a teacher?
- 10) How have the professional development courses helped you with your inclusive classroom?
- 11) What additional ongoing training would be beneficial to help you teach students with multiple learning disabilities?
- 12) Please provide additional information about teacher preparedness and teaching students with multiple learning disabilities.

Appendix E: Individual Questionnaire Questions

Questionnaire

2. What is your gender?
15. What is your age?
16. What is your highest level of education?
17. How long have you been teaching?
18. What pre-service training did you receive?
19. Please detail the pre-service training you received specifically for students with multiple learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
20. What subject do you teach currently? What grade level?
21. How often do you receive continuing education?
22. Was it your choice to teach in an inclusive classroom or was this decision made by the Administration?
23. If you had the choice, would you continue to teach in an inclusive classroom?
24. What is the most difficult part of teaching in an inclusive classroom?
25. Please describe your current experience working with students with multiple learning disabilities.
26. Please describe any pre-service preparation that you received before teaching in an inclusive classroom.
27. What pre-service training did you receive to prepare you to specifically teach students with multiple learning disabilities?

Appendix F: Request for Meeting

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to better understand how pre-service training prepares educators to teach in an inclusive classroom, including students with multiple learning disabilities. To participate you must be a K-12 teacher in Georgia, currently teaching with at least one year of experience. Participants will complete a questionnaire (20 minutes), be interviewed (30-45 minutes), and be a part of a focus group (1-1.5 hours). If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please direct message me for more information. An information sheet will be emailed to you one week prior to the interview.

Appendix G: Board of Education Approval

Re: [External] Doctoral Research in CCPS - Hart, Tondra - Outlook - Google Chrome

about:blank

Delete Archive Report Reply Reply all Forward Zoom Read / Unread Categorize Flag / Unflag Print ...

Re: [External] Doctoral Research in CCPS

From: [Redacted]
Sent: Friday, August 11, 2023 8:37:14 AM
To: Hart, Tondra [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: Re: [External] Doctoral Research in CCPS

Ms Hart - attached for your records is the approved Research Study application.

Good luck!

[Redacted]
[Redacted] Assistant to Assistant Superintendent
Catoosa County Public Schools
PH: [Redacted]

On Fri, Aug 4, 2023 at 6:00 PM Hart, Tondra [Redacted] wrote:
Good Afternoon,
Thank you so much for responding to my email. I really appreciate any assistance you can provide. I will complete the form and return it to you as soon as possible. Have a great weekend.

From: [Redacted]
Sent: Friday, August 4, 2023 5:33 PM
To: Hart, Tondra [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: [External] Doctoral Research in CCPS