Theory to Practice: Perceptions of School Psychologists, Special Education, and General Education Teachers on Social Skills Instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment

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Abstract

Social-Emotional Learning for students with disabilities is an important topic in education. Currently, over 13% of students in schools K–12 have a documented disability, of which many are faced with deficits in social-emotional development. Furthermore, there appears to be a gap between the research literature and how instructional practices are used to support students with social-emotional deficits. This case study design aimed to understand how three general education teachers, four special education teachers, and three school psychologists implemented social-skills instructional practices for students with high-incidence disabilities in the LRE. These participants represented 12 different schools from four school districts within the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. This research found that student-needs, knowledge, and experience of the three stakeholders, and school culture, contributed to the selection of instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits within the least restrictive environment. In addition, the need for collaboration was found to be a key element when addressing student's needs, building knowledge, and creating a positive school culture. Results indicated that push-in supports were the primary instructional practice among the 12 schools. Consultation and coteaching were rarely used because they required much coordination and collaboration. All three stakeholder groups reported that the selection of instructional practices was dependent on individual student needs. However, it was also found that some instructional practices were not available as an option in some schools. Further research on instructional practice offerings could shed light on the discrepancy.

Keywords: social-emotional skills, special education, learning disabilities, other health impairments, social-emotional learning, instructional practices, least restrictive environment

Dedication

To my mother, Rory C. Reeser, a wonderful woman who has taught me to be strong, be honest, and most importantly, be nice.

To my husband, Jeffery, for taking on the responsibility of two parents.

To my daughter, Phoenix, for reminding me to keep doing my homework especially when I was procrastinating.

To my son, Matthew, for teaching me patience.

To my dog, Molly B. Ware, for being there since the beginning.

Finally, I dedicate this to myself because I achieved my goal despite many challenges and setbacks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Holistic child development in education is when a school system addresses both academic and social behaviors, creating a well-rounded child. Current research studies address the newfound importance in social-emotional learning (SEL) and development (Choi, Meisenheimer, McCart, & Sailor, 2017; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Kirby, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Zuckerbrod, 2018). However, as the amount of research is growing in SEL, there is still a gap in how these social behaviors are addressed for students with disabilities (Gresham, 2016; IDEA, 2004; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Furthermore, there is limited research on professional attitudes and perceptions when educating students with disabilities in social-emotional skills.

Through this research, the author argues that while SEL is promoted for students, there is limited research on how instruction is administered to students with disabilities while maintaining the least restrictive environment (LRE) for this instruction. Also, the disconnect appears to be between how instructional practices are determined and the perceptions of the professionals in the field. That is to say that there is a gap between how stakeholders make decisions on what instructional practices and LRE will be selected for students with disabilities in SEL and how school culture, the teacher experience, and teacher knowledge effect those decisions (Bowers, Whitford, & Maines, 2018; Collins, Hawkins, & Nabors, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to understand and record how the key stakeholders such as special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists are supporting students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) and Other Health Impairments (OHIs) in social skills development within the LRE using a variety of instructional intervention practices and strategies.

Furthermore, the study explored if school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence the selection of LRE for social skills instructional intervention practices and strategies.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Historically, students with disabilities were left uneducated or placed into institutions far away from home. However, following the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with disabilities act, individuals with disabilities were granted rights that restrict this type of exclusion. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted to provide equal access to education for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Currently, the public education system offers a free and appropriate public education to all students (IDEA, 2004). This education includes students identified with disabilities who experience an adverse educational impact as a result of the disability. When a student qualifies for special education, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is written with appropriate goals and services. While not all students with a disability who qualify for special education require services in the area of social-emotional skills, there are those that do require specially designed instruction (SDI). Once a student in special education has an IEP, the team must determine how to deliver services.

This study will address four inclusive practices conducted within the LRE. These practices include: (a) consultation, (b) coteaching, (c) push-in supports, and (d) pull-out services. Consultation, coteaching, and push-in supports are viewed as inclusive practices when instructing students in necessary skill sets. While pull-out services are the removing of students from the general education setting, using limited pull-out as a method of instruction allows students to be included to the maximum extent possible. Thus, inclusion is educating children equally, in the same school environment, using collaboration, parent involvement, creating a safe

and healthy environment, and writing plans and goals that address the individual child (NASET, 2019). Inclusion is a multilevel approach to include students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. Furthermore, this multilevel approach does not sacrifice high quality instruction that addresses individual student needs (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Carter et al., 2015; Ford, 2013; Kochhar, Taymans, & West, 2000).

In addition to instructional practices and inclusion, schools that have a school culture of collaboration are benefiting and promoting inclusive and effective practices in special education. A school culture of collaboration includes five key elements. These five elements are trust, sharing, environment, communication, and community (Boyle & Topping, 2012; Rosen, 2007; Strogilos, Nikolaraizi, & Tragoulia, 2012). This researcher further argues that the instructional practices within school settings are not only affected by a school culture but also by the experience and knowledge of the professionals in the field when selecting the LRE for students with social-emotional deficits. For this study, the perceptions of how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge will be discussed through the perceptions of three key stakeholders.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, there is limited research pertaining to social skills development for individuals with high-incident disabilities. Generally, there are four educational practices utilized in the instruction of students with disabilities. The four practices include consultation of the special education teacher with the general education teacher, coteaching, push-in supports provided by paraprofessionals or special education teachers, and pull-out services in a separate location.

Furthermore, many instructional practices promote the inclusion of students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. While full inclusion is often promoted, students with disabilities are unique in their needs and require a variety of environments and strategies to

address social-emotional development (Ford, 2013; Kirby, 2017). In addition to the instructional

practices used when instructing students in social-emotional development, there are other factors

that are not substantially researched. These circumstances include few curriculum or

instructional practices that specifically address social skills instruction for students with

disabilities (Choi et al., 2017). Hence, this study aims to address how school culture, teacher

experience, and knowledge, impact which instructional practices are selected for educating

students with disabilities with social-emotional deficits within the LRE.

Purpose of the Study

Currently, schools within the public system are making a viable effort to address holistic

child development. This is noted in the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

This act promotes academic learning as well as social-emotional development (CASEL, 2018).

However, limited resources are put towards addressing social-emotional development for these

students (NCES, 2019; Emam & Kazem, 2015; Korinek & Defur, 2016; McLeskey, Waldron, &

Redd, 2014). Since effective development of social-emotional skills are necessary for the

implementation of inclusive practices, transition to adult life, and academic success it is critical

that schools take the time and effort to address this development. So, while many schools are

promoting fully inclusive settings, research indicates that differentiated instructional practices

need be considered to meet the unique needs of all students, that than creating a standardized

approach to instruction (Elder, 2015; Poon-Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013; Vlachou, Stavroussi, &

Didaskalou, 2016).

These standardized instructional practices generally indicate that students should be

educated in the general education setting using consultation, push-in, or coteaching. However,

there are other indicators that address pull-out settings, such as resource rooms, and indicate that

such settings are effective solutions for social skills development in students with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013; Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015). Furthermore, there are few social skills instructional strategies that have been determined to be effective in either location (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Montalbano & Warzel, 2012). Furthermore, the research presents evidence of the effectiveness of social skills instructional practices related to school culture, teacher, experience, and knowledge, however little is discussed about how an IEP team determines LRE and instructional practices for students with disabilities (Amr, Al-Natour, Al-Abdallat, & Alkhamra, 2016; Banks, Frawley, & Mccoy, 2015; Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Cote et al., 2010; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kang, Kang, & Plunkett, 2015; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Montalbano & Warzel, 2012; Myers, Freeman, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Sakiz, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012; Welch et al., 2010).

Research Questions

   Main question. What are the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the implementation of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

   Subquestion 1. How does school culture influence perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists as it relates to social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

   Subquestion 2. How does experience and knowledge of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists influence perceptions of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

This descriptive case study will address the perceptions of three key stakeholders in the field of special education. By speaking with these professionals, the researcher sought to understand how instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits are determined. Thus, further adding an understanding of how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge contribute to these decisions. This case study will seek to understand the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the phenomenon of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment (LRE) and how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge, influence these special education practices. Thus, providing an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, which will ultimately spark discussions on the effectiveness of SEL practices and strategies. Furthermore, this study intends to add to the greater body of knowledge on the subject of social-emotional development for students with disabilities, as there is limited research on strategies and interventions for these students (Gresham, 2016; IDEA, 2004).

In addition, there is also limited research on the perceptions of these three professionals as a unit within education, much of the research addresses first-year teachers, and academic instructional practices which do not address the instructional practices for SEL (Bowers et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2016). In addition, while social skills instruction on a broader scale is highly discussed, there is limited research on specific strategies and interventions within the LRE for instructing students with disabilities, specifically those identified as having high-incidence disabilities (Gresham, 2016; Smith & Wallace, 2011).

Definition of Terms

Accommodations: Changes in presentation, response, setting, timing that alters how measures are administered without changing what is being assessed (Wright and Wright, 2017).

Adverse educational impact: To qualify for special education, a student must have a disability, and that disability must create an educational impact (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder marked by an ongoing pattern of inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development (NIMH, 2019).

Autism: A disability that affects communication and social interactions, and may include unusual responses to sensory experiences (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Collaboration: Working together to create value within a space (Rosen, 2007).

Consultation: Special education teachers providing professional advice (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

Curriculum: Courses offered by an educational institution or school (Webster-Merriam, 2020).

Differentiated instruction: A method of delivering instruction that meets the unique needs of students through a variety of strategies (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

Direct instruction: Instructional strategy that presents content and skills in a specific order (Parent Info Center, 2008).

Disability: An impairment that results in an adverse educational impact that further requires a student to require special education (Parent Info Center, 2008).

Educational disturbances: Disability category, which includes depression, fears, schizophrenia and, adversely affects educational performance (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Evidence-based: Refers to research, data, and documentation of interventions used to promote student growth, and are peer-reviewed or validated from a panel of experts (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE): The right of students with disabilities to receive an education with no cost to parents that meets the unique needs of the student (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

General education: The setting where the standard curriculum intended for all students from grades K–12 without modifications or accommodations (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

High-incidence disabilities: Disabilities that occur more often than others. These include ADHD, Autism, and Specific Learning Disability.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA): IDEA is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities in the United States and ensures special education and related services to those children (IDEA, 2004).

Individual education plan (IEP): A document created that includes goals, services, and a current level of performance for students who qualify for special education (Davis & Weinfeld, 2008).

Inclusion: An effort to make sure students with disabilities go to school with and alongside peers in their community while promoting high standards and success for all learners (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Instructional intervention practices: Practices in education that include consultation, coteaching, push-in supports, and pull-out services.

Least restrictive environment (LRE): Legal requirement to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Modifications: Changes in what the student is expected to demonstrate, which includes changes in instruction, content, and performance, which may include changes in assessments (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS): Levels of supports for students within the school system; generally, there are three tiers.

Other health impairment (OHI): Disability category, which refers to limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems that adversely affect educational performance (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Paraprofessional: An individual employed by a public school who is supervised by a certified teacher (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Pull-out services: The removal of a student from the general education setting for special education services (Parent Info Center, 2008).

Practices: An overarching term which includes many or most students and can be location-specific. These practices include consultation, coteaching, push-in supports, pull-out services.

Resource room: Special education settings with small groups of students receiving specially designed instruction with students spending less than 50% of their school day within this setting (Understanding Special Education, 2019).

Response to Intervention (RTI): A process for providing instruction, interventions, and supports for students (Robinson, 2016).

Setting: Location when instruction takes place.

Social-emotional skills: Attitudes, emotions, and goal that are appropriate within society.

Special education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Wright & Wright, 2017).

Specially designed instruction (SDI): SDI is *"*adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that results from the child's disability; and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children." (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, Section 300.39, para. 1).

Specific learning disability (SLD): "Special education term used to define a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language spoken or written that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical equations" (Understanding Special Education, 2019, The Special Education Terms and Definitions Section para. 56).

Strategies: Strategies are techniques in the delivery of instruction that includes modeling, coaching, direct instruction, and small groupings, which can be delivered within any setting (Freeman & Sugai, 2013).

WAC. Washington Administrative Code: State-specific regulations, which further mandates and regulates education laws in Washington state (WAC, 2019).

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

For this case study, the researcher has made the following assumptions. First the researcher sought to find a difference in perceptions between the special education teacher,

general education teacher, and school psychologist, as each has a different viewpoint. Second, these perceptions will identify how school culture, experience, and knowledge influence how the three key stakeholders make decisions on LRE and implementation of intervention practices related to SEL for student with disabilities. Finally, the research will spark discussion and open up conversation on how research related to inclusion for student with disabilities is different from practice in the field.

The geographic location and the selection of participants were delimiting factors. This study took place in several Pacific Northwest school districts, with participants working in 12 different schools. The participants in the study were the adult staff who have had experience working with students with disabilities. While there are other stakeholders involved in IEP teams, such as the parents, administrators, and other specialists, this study explored only those perspectives of selected participants as the research indicated a gap in perceptions from these individuals. Furthermore, the participants were not required to be working with the same students, or as a single unit, but rather have had experience in their current job working with students with SLD or OHI in social-emotional development.

The limitations of this case study included sample size, researcher bias, time, and lack of training on the part of the researcher. First, this case study was limited by the number of participants in that there were 10 total participants. Second, this case study was selected as it is of high interest to the researcher. The researcher is a special education teacher and is familiar with instructional practices. The researcher's experience in special education contributed to the interpretation of the data gathered in this study. Next, data collection and analysis are a time-consuming process. In order to stay mindful and present in the data collection process the

researcher used a journal to document steps in the process. Finally, the researcher has no previous experience in collecting data needed for this case study.

Summary

Some students identified as having an SLD or an OHI can also have social-emotional deficits. While current education policies promote a variety of intervention practices. These methods include consultation of professionals with the general education teacher, coteaching with general education and special education teachers, push-in supports of special education teachers, specialists, or paraprofessionals supporting students in the general education classroom, and pull-out services which includes special education teachers or other professionals removing students from the general education setting (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013; Lang & Bell, 2017; Strogilos, & Stefanidis, 2015). The above-mentioned practices promote the LRE in which students are educated alongside typically developing peers to the maximum extent possible (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Inclusive practices are methods of instructing students with limited time removed from the general education setting. Fully inclusive practices do not include pull-out services; however, the instructional intervention practices have been determined to have a strong impact on student outcomes, indicating that the instructional intervention practices are more important than the environment in which students receive the instruction (Horner & Sugai, 2015; NCES, 2019; Shuster et al., 2017).

In addition to instructional practices, a culture of collaboration is essential to promote effective intervention. School culture is influenced by philosophy and dedication to collaboration, which further includes trust, environment, communication, and community (Boyle & Topping, 2012; Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

Similarly, teacher experience contributes to the high-quality instruction presented by teachers. More experienced teachers tend to have more strategies for educating students with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Consequently, while teacher experience and knowledge may influence the selection of instructional practices, so may a teacher's perception about the ability to instruct students with disabilities can contribute to effectiveness of instructional practices and implementation of strategies (King-Sears, Carran, Dammann, & Sullivan Arter, 2012; Kirby, 2017; Sharma & Sokal, 2016 ;Wadlington & Wadlington, 2011). Thus, a teacher's perception of ability in instructing students with disabilities can contribute to effectiveness of instructional practices and implementation of strategies (Breeman et al., 2015; Lang & Bell, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wang et al., 2016).

Therefore, while there are several key stakeholders involved in supporting student success, it is important to address how these stakeholders are determining student success. It is important to address how these stakeholders are determining setting, instruction intervention practices, and intervention strategies in education students with social-emotional deficits. This study will look at the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence social skills instructional practices and strategies in the LRE (Bowers et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2016). The next chapter will explore in detail the review of literature that informs the need to conduct this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of education touched upon an important aspect of child development, which is not only acquiring academic knowledge but also developing social-emotional skills. Gandhi noted, "By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man; body, mind, and spirit" (M. K. Gandhi, Harijan, July 31, 1937). Over the last several decades, the American education system has been attempting to focus on holistic child development. This is evidenced by the number of research studies that address both social-emotional skills and academic knowledge acquisition (Choi, Meisenheimer, McCart, & Sailor, 2017; Durlak et al., 2011; Kirby, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Zuckerbrod, 2018). The researcher, through this literature review paper, argues that while SEL has been promoted for students in general education, there is limited research on SEL for students in special education within the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Gresham, 2016; IDEA, 2004).

Additionally, there appears to be a gap in the research between the theoretical stance in research about social-emotional development and the perceptions of the key stakeholders in the field (Bowers et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2016). While much of the research promotes inclusion, with many preservice programs for educators promoting a philosophy of inclusion, students with high-incident disabilities are being educated in other settings regardless of the inclusive philosophy. (Ford, 2013; Gavish, 2017b). Thus, creating a disconnect between theory and practice. Hence, it is necessary to understand and record how practitioners such as special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists are supporting students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) and Other Health Impairments (OHIs) in social skills development within the LRE using a variety of instructional intervention practices and strategies.

Furthermore, the study explored if school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence the selection of LRE for social skills instructional intervention practices and strategies.

As the number of students with disabilities has been on a slow rise since 2012, effective instructional strategies for addressing each student is necessary (NCES, 2019). As recent as 2017-2018, 13.7% of students', kindergarten through 12th grade, were classified as having a documented disability. Of these students, 4.5% were labeled as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and 1.7% were categorized as having an Other Health Impairment (OHI), indicating these groups as the largest impacted by their disabilities, other than those with Speech and Language Impairments (Hibel & Jasper, 2012; NCES, 2019). Disabilities can range from minor to severe, and while some individuals may need support in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math, there are others that require supports in social skills, behavior, self-care, mobility, and communication (IDEA, 2004).

Students with disabilities that fall within the categories of SLD or OHI are considered to have high-incidence disabilities (Avramidis, 2013; Gresham et al., 2001; Lane, Carter, & Sisco, 2012). These disabilities are most prevalent and generally non-observable, determined mainly by testing and analysis of performance. Unlike other disabilities that may have an observable difference (Braun & Braun, 2015). Students within these categories of special education are of average intelligence; however, they experience struggles with the acquisition of knowledge and executive functioning skills (Graham, 2017; Ness & Middleton, 2012, WAC, 2019). Executive functioning includes self-regulation, attention, and focus (Espelage et al., 2016; Graham, 2017; Holmes, Kim-Spoon, & Deater-Deckard, 2016; van Lier & Deater-Deckard, 2016; Vlachou et al., 2016; Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016). Without effective executive functioning skills, students can struggle with peer relations, planning, memory, and flexible thinking (Halle, & Darling-

Churchill, 2016). These skills are necessary for effective social skills development (Holmes et al., 2016).

Those students whose disabilities fall under the SLD category are those that demonstrate a weakness in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math, but may also have deficits in social-emotional skills (Carter et al., 2015; Chao & Chou, 2017; Gresham, 2016; Halle, & Darling-Churchill, 2016; Holopainen, Taipale, & Savolainen, 2017; Miller, Fenty, Scott, & Park, 2011; Pesova, Sivevska, & Runceva, 2014). While there is a variety of research pertaining to supporting students with disabilities who need academic skill development in the areas of reading or math, there is less focus on how to support these students in the area of social skills development (Choi et al., 2017; Emam & Kazem, 2015; Korinek & Defur, 2016; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

Consequently, while social skills instruction on a broader scale is highly discussed, there is limited research on specific strategies and interventions, within the LRE for instructing students with disabilities, specifically those identified as having high-incidence disabilities (Gresham, 2016; Harrison, Soares, Rudzinski, & Johnson, 2019; Smith & Wallace, 2011). Current school frameworks include Response to Intervention (RTI) and general education social skills instruction designed to benefit the majority (Avramidis, 2013; Durlak et al., 2011; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Gresham, 2016; Gresham et al., 2001; Lane et al., 2012; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016; Robinson, 2016; Zuckerbrod, 2018). In addition to SLD and OHI, the term *high-incidence disabilities* includes autism and emotional disturbances. For the purpose of this study, high-incidence disabilities will refer to disabilities within the categories of SLD and OHI (Gresham et al., 2001; Lane, et al., 2012). This study sought to understand the

perceptions of professionals in determining LRE and instructional intervention practices related to social skills development for students with high-incidence disabilities.

While the current educational policy recommends inclusive practices in all subject areas, including social-emotional development for special education, there are barriers to implementing fully inclusive teaching environments, which include inadequate time for collaboration (Bubpha, 2014; Puckett, Mathur, & Zamora, 2017). Consequently, proper instruction for students with social skills deficits includes direct and explicit instruction (Milligan, Phillips, & Morgan, 2016; Montalbano & Warzel, 2012). In order to implement direct instruction, adequate time for planning, space for small groups, and trained staff are necessary. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2015), intervention strategies should be mixed, using a variety of methods based on individual students, which may include separate intensive, instructional groups, thus contradicting the nationwide push toward full inclusion for all.

According to Gresham (2016), a prominent researcher in the area of social skills, more research in function-based, intensive social skills interventions are needed for special education regardless of location. These interventions must be evidence-based, something Fuchs and Fuchs (2015) says is not the case for inclusive practices, indicating that some interventions conducted in the general education environment are not effective. Furthermore, with the Endrew F v. Douglas County School District (2017) case, special education was further defined as setting high expectations and making progress towards challenging goals for students with disabilities. Endrew established expectations for students with disabilities that require access to more than a basic education, but rather a rich, fulfilling education. The Endrew case, however, does not imply specific instructional practices, strategies, or environments and suggests that each

individual student is different based on needs leaving final instructional interventions and LRE

up to the IEP team (Kauffman, Wiley, Travers, Badar, & Anastasiou, 2019).

Carter et al. (2015) also discusses how more information on effective social skills

instruction is necessary. While the researchers mentioned above focused on instructional

intervention practices, there are other researchers such as Oh-Young and Filler (2015) who

believe that selecting the correct learning environment for the student is far more important than

the instructional intervention. For example, their meta-analysis study highlighted that effective

placements for students with disabilities showed a significant increase in social outcomes when

students were placed in a more inclusive setting. Research conducted by Elliott and McKenney

(1998) also suggests that separation of special education and general education is less effective

than an integrated design. Researchers, McLeskey, Waldron, and Redd, (2014) conducted a case

study on a highly effective inclusive school, concluding that while it is possible to address

outcomes, there was little evidence to conclude that inclusive schools were in fact highly

effective (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015).

As noted earlier, there appears to be a gap in the research between what the research

discusses about social-emotional development and the perceptions of the key stakeholders in the

field. Currently, there are several articles on social-emotional development and the need for such

SEL programs that address school-wide implementation (Collins et al., 2016; Durlak, Weissberg,

Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Gresham, 2015; Oberle et al., 2016; Schonert-Reichl,

2017; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). However, there are also a few articles

addressing the limitations of these school-wide SEL programs in addressing students with special

education needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Shuster et al., 2017). Hence, it is necessary to

understand and record how practitioners are addressing these students with SLD and OHI

disabilities in social skills development within the LRE. Furthermore, this study explored if

school culture and teacher experience and knowledge influence the selection of social skills

instructional interventions in the LRE.

Conceptual Framework

Students with disabilities who receive special education services encounter several

professionals in the field. These stakeholders include the general education teacher, the special

education teacher, and the school psychologist. These three professionals are responsible for

collaborating with each other to ensure effecting instructional planning for students with

disabilities. Thus, collaboration is key for the implementation of special education instructional

intervention practices, strategies, method of delivery for SDI, and determining LRE for students.

Key stakeholders need to work together and address a culture of collaboration. According to

Rosen (2007, 2013), there are 10 key elements in collaboration; these include:

- developing trust,

- sharing ideas,

- having common goals,

- embracing innovation,

- environment conducive for collaboration,

- making room for the unexpected,

- taking a stance on ideas, not people,

- communicating effectively and openly,

- sharing a sense of community or belonging, and

- creating value.

Within this list of cultural collaboration, school cultures of collaboration generally address five of these elements. These five elements are trust, sharing, environment, communication, and community (Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Trust is established and creates a school culture of collaboration when teachers work together to facilitate student learning. Trust is seen in many instructional practices, such as effective consultation and coteaching. Sharing consists of professionals sharing their insights and techniques (Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). The third element is environment. The environment has to do with a specific location that allows for space for instructional practices. For example, many schools use resource room settings because there is not enough room in the classroom to establish small groups within the general education setting (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). Therefore, the physical environment contributes to the collaborative practices within schools, sometimes dictating how inclusive practices are developed. The next element of a collaborative school culture involves communication. Schools that allow for frequent opportunities for collaboration are more successful in implementing special education instructional practices (Boyle & Topping, 2012). The final element addressed in this study involves community. School communities are established by having shared goals and interests, which include school-wide philosophy, school-wide interventions, and mission statements (Kauffman et al., 2019; Rosen, 2007; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

School-wide interventions for social-emotional needs are practices that include the use of Positive Behavior Interventions Supports (PBIS), and general education curriculum focused on SEL (Myers et al., 2017; Shuster et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). These practices are aimed at the general education population with a tier of interventions designed to increase in intensity for targeted groups of students regardless of disability. Shuster et al., (2017) suggests that there is an

assumption that those who receive special education services within the area of social-emotional development are receiving their instructional interventions through their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), this is not always the case. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) also indicate that while students with high-incidence disabilities require additional high-quality intensive instructional practices, special education is a separate tier of supports (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

This study will address four inclusive practices conducted within the LRE. These practices are described within the Inclusive Methods of Education (IMOE) (Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013). IMOE consists of the four following practices: (a) consultation, (b) coteaching, (c) push-in supports, and (d) pull-out services. Consultation, coteaching, and push-in supports are viewed as inclusive practices when instructing students in necessary skill sets. Pull-out services refer to resource room settings or specialized classrooms (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Therefore, while a pull-out service model of instruction delivery is not a fully inclusive practice, it is being addressed in this study as an inclusive practice used in education under the label of IMOE as it is part of the LRE.

Inclusion is educating children equally, in the same school environment, using collaboration, parent involvement, creating a safe and healthy environment, and writing plans and goals that address individual student needs (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Kirby, 2017; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Inclusion is a multilevel approach that does not overlook the individual needs of a student with disabilities. Furthermore, inclusion is not separating students based on disabilities, reducing services, focusing on integration, expecting all students to do the same thing, or leaving students in the general education classroom without supports (Kirby, 2017; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; NASET, 2019). Furthermore, inclusion does not

compromise high-quality instruction (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Carter et al., 2015; Ford, 2013; Kochhar, Taymans, & West, 2000).

It should also be noted that inclusive practices are not considered a placement, and students could receive special education services and specially designed instruction (SDI) in any combination of one or four inclusive practices. Special education is a continuum of services that work towards each individual students' needs. In addition, for this study, the term setting is used to describe where students are receiving SDI in social-emotional development and performance related to their specific IEP goals (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

Collaboration. Collaboration occurs when special education teacher, general education teachers, and other professional staff work together to develop IEPs for students, determine eligibility for special educations services, monitor progress on goals, instruct students in academic and social areas, and plan instructional practices (Boyle & Topping, 2012). Therefore, while collaboration may occur at varying levels, many professionals in the field are given little time to collaborate with other team members. However, effective collaboration is beneficial to both the students and the staff. Collaboration is not a stand-alone service, and should be employed extensively across the board for effective instructional practices, specifically for students with disabilities. Therefore, while the following practices can be implemented on a case by case basis, the collaborative practices of the professionals must occur to ensure students are receiving high-quality instruction within the LRE (Kauffman et al., 2019; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

Consultation. Consultation is defined as the general education teacher collaborating with the special education teacher and other professionals on lessons, LRE, instructional intervention

practices, and strategies (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Consultation allows students to receive SDI within the general education setting. Therefore, the practice of collaboration should frequently occur, with student-focused success criteria (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). In addition to the frequency of collaboration opportunities, general education teachers must understand their roles and relationships with the staff, and utilize their access to specially trained staff (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Consultation is similar to coteaching in that collaborators are considered successful when all parties share respect, trust, and common philosophies. However, consultation does not equate to teachers having shared teaching responsibilities like many coteaching partnerships (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Consultation efforts can also include differentiated instruction. This type of instruction provides engaging learning for all students, the use of data, and clarification of complex or key concepts (Ford, 2013).

A barrier to successful consultation in the IMOE is that special education teachers may have too much influence and are viewed in a supervisory role as opposed to a collaborative role. This view can change with time and practice, which is why collaboration has a successful outcome for student performance. Building strong working relationships between team members contributes to student success. Another barrier to a successful collaborative relationship finding the time to meet. As with other strategies of instruction, having adequate time to collaborate is beneficial to success. When allowed more time to collaborate, team members are able to build stronger relationships with each other and facilitate changes in instructional practices that may not be possible in everyday teaching (Cahill & Mitra, 2008). Teachers themselves also view consultation with collaboration as being difficult, which can then lead to limited success (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Therefore, the implementation of effective collaboration can be

influenced by individuals' perceptions, communication styles, and inadequate time to meet with team members. Overall, consultation between special and general education teachers is most successful when effective communication strategies are used, and team members can meet regularly and frequently (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

      Coteaching. Coteaching is an inclusive instructional practice that consists of two professionals working together to educate students with and without disabilities in the general education setting. Often coteaching includes a special education teacher working with a general education teacher using mixed ability groupings and varied instructional strategies (Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015). However, research suggests that the effectiveness of coteaching is minimal, with few outcome-based studies, further stating that coteaching is determined effective based on school support, shared attitudes, willingness to utilize accommodations, modifications, and supplementary aids (Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013; Strogilos, & Stefanidis, 2015). However, the instructional practice of coteaching allows for students with and without disabilities to receive supports in the same setting, alongside each other. Thus, establishing that coteaching as one effective strategy for students with SLD (Ford, 2013; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015).

      The researcher, Ford (2013), goes on further to say that for some students coteaching is more beneficial than removing students from the general education setting for daily instruction. Researchers, Fuchs and Fuchs (2015), McLeskey and Waldron (2011), and Strogilos, and Stefanidis (2015) have also suggested that while some students do benefit from coteaching, others benefit from pull-out services and supports beyond the strategies offered in the coteaching general education setting. Therefore, indicating that both instructional interventions have value, and the LRE for instructional interventions is dictated by the individual student's needs.

Coteaching can include four different methods of instruction. These methods include a lead and support teacher, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching. The lead and support teaching cooperative consist of one teacher leading the lesson while the other teacher is supporting. These roles are interchangeable from lesson to lesson, over the course of a day, or on a weekly basis. However, typically, the general education teacher instructs in the bulk of the general education curriculum, and the special education teacher takes on a more supportive role through specialized skills instruction. These roles could then play to the individual teachers' strengths (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Ford, 2013). While allowing flexibility, a few barriers to actual success is the disproportionate distribution of responsibilities. One teacher may feel that the other teacher has more work, while the other may feel like their voice is not being heard. Thus, leading to frustrations when there is not enough time for cooperative planning or debriefing (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015).

Station teaching consists of multiple staff running different lessons or combinations of lessons at a station in the classroom. Lessons are then instructed as small groups rotating through each station. Students can transition through each station to learn something new. However, station teaching can be difficult due to a lack of adequate space and personnel (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Ford, 2013). As noted previously, time is also a factor in effective station teaching. For example, teachers require additional time to meet with each other to discuss lesson plans, subjects, and strategies. Furthermore, teachers should be instructing in similar areas or avoiding too much overlap. Consequently, one benefit of this style of teaching is that teachers can instruct in areas that they are stronger in which in turn, benefits students (Cahill & Mitra, 2008).

Parallel teaching is similar to station teaching. However, in parallel teaching, a special education teacher and general education teacher are teaching the same lesson at the same time.

Thus, benefiting students in the methods used by experienced teachers and reduces the size of the groups. Again, however, inadequate time for planning becomes a challenge (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Ford, 2013).

The fourth type of coteaching is called alternative teaching. Alternative teaching consists of one teacher instructing the whole group, while the other is instructing supplemental, prerequisite, or reviewing skills (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Ford, 2013). Thus, beneficial as students are being instructed on the same or similar subject matter. Again, however, time, teacher disposition, and space become the largest challenges for this type of instruction.

Pull-out services. Pull-out services are conducted similarly to alternative teaching, though conducted in an alternative setting. These pull-out services are generally conducted outside of the classroom in the special education setting. These settings are frequently referred to as resources rooms. Resource room teachers typically instruct students in these small groups and focus on reteaching, preteaching, alternative teaching, and supplemental teaching. These groups typically consist of all of the students demonstrating deficits in social-emotional development (Gresham et al., 2001; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Moreover, a barrier to using pull-out services or using a resource room pertains to current strategies or methods being used in the classroom (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013). While the special education teacher is a specialist on various strategies and interventions, the time, the size of the caseload, and the dynamic of students makes it difficult to collaborate effectively with general education teachers (Freeman & Sugai, 2013). Ultimately, resource room teachers often struggle with teaching social skills in the resource setting because of the large class sizes and the

distribution across grade levels (Boyle & Topping, 2012; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016).

While pull-out services are not considered fully inclusive, limiting the time a student is removed from the general education setting can be viewed as a more inclusive practice. In addition, researchers suggest pull-out services may be the best option for educating students in small groups, providing direct instruction and focusing on IEP goals (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Dobbins et al., 2010; Gresham et al., 2001; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013). Resource room teachers instruct students in these small groups with as few as one to three students and focus on reteaching, preteaching, alternative and supplemental teaching (Gresham, et al., 2001; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Ultimately, only instructing students with similar deficits does not address the generalization of skills learned in real-life situations with same-age peers of varied ability and skill levels. Furthermore, finding ways to implement mixed ability groups can be difficult (Conderman & Hedin, 2017).

In addition to location small group instruction strategies conducted in the resource room setting further supporting acquisition and performance; however, strategy cannot address the generalization of social skills when conducted outside of the general education setting (Gresham et al., 2001; Miller et al., 2011; Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016). Gresham, Sugai, and Horner (2001), indicate that more students should be receiving interventions within the setting where they lack the appropriate social skills. In addition, effective social skills instruction should occur more than three and a half hours a week for a positive impact, a situation which does not always occur (Gresham et al., 2001).

Often, students with disabilities are also receiving supplant instruction instead of supplemental instruction based on the general education curriculum. Consequently, resource

room instruction can create a stigma for students as they do not learn the same as other student, or they are not as included with peers in their classroom (Elliott & McKenney, 1998). However, pull-out services have both strengths and challenges, indicating that the needs of the student override the setting in which instructional interventions occur. In other words, as long as students are receiving high-quality instruction, the location is not as important (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Push-in supports. Push-in supports may appear a variety of different ways. These supports refer to a special education professional, such as paraprofessionals, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, or special education teachers. These professionals enter the general education classroom to provide small group instruction or direct instruction for those students with academic, adaptive, or social deficits. However, push-in supports have limited success due to difficulty in maintaining a level of intensity in instruction, continued maintenance of instruction, and the majority of overall instruction continues to be delivered by the general education teacher (Holopainen et al., 2017; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). However, a benefit for push-in supports is the ability to embed instruction into the general education setting thus, promoting inclusion (Holopainen et al., 2017). Furthermore, effective instructional interventions should be delivered in the educational setting where students are lacking skills thus, promoting generalization of the skills learned in a small group setting and with peers of various abilities and skills (Gresham et al., 2001; Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016).

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Special education history. Early special education programs, created in the late 1800s, were designed to reform at-risk youth living in low-income urban neighborhoods. These schools addressed manual labor training and the moral training of African American students

(Wrightslaw, n.d.). In 1896, the first United States public school was opened in Rhode Island for students with special needs, which included students who were deaf and blind (Reynolds, Vannests, & Fletcher-Janzen, 2014). These separate schools continued until 1930 when secondary schools began educating some students with mild forms of disabilities who could be included in the school environment with simple modifications (ESE, 2014). By the 1940s, programs for students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and brain injuries were included in special education facilities. These institutions then began opening their doors to anyone with a disability (ESE, 2014).

Eventually, due to existing inhumane conditions and inequality, activists fought to make changes. Many of the laws created to support students with special needs over the years manifested into the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004), which has taken on a couple of revisions as well. One revision was Public Law (PL) 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (1975). PL 94-142 is the Education for All Handicapped Children Act which allows and promotes all learners to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). In addition to providing free education, this act requires all schools receiving federal funding to provide for students with disabilities by accommodating their special needs and providing them with fair and equal access to education. Over the years, this act has been revisited and changed to promote the education of students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Special education services. In the United States, special education is defined as "specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the needs of a child with a disability." (Wrightslaw, n.d., p. 1). In addition to being free, IDEA includes the term "appropriate" and to be executed within the "least restrictive environment" (2004). Those students who are found eligible for special education must have an Individual Education Plan

(IEP) developed for them established by federal regulations, and further mandated and interpreted by state ordinances (IDEA 2004; WAC 392-172A-03090). Before an IEP is developed, a team of qualified professionals administers assessments in areas of suspected disability, using evaluative measures to determine eligibility. Assessments are used to determine deficits, strengths, and the educational impact of the disability. Some assessments include cognitive assessments, communication assessments, fine motor, and gross motor assessments, academic assessments, observations, interviews, adaptive rating scales, and social-emotional rating scales. These professionals, along with the parents and other invited members of the team, review the information gathered and make a decision as to whether the student will be eligible for special education services (IDEA, 2004; Wright & Wright, 2017).

While there are several criteria for determining eligibility for special education, the top three criteria that all student intervention teams look for are: (a) if a student is identified as having a disability, (b) if this disability has an adverse educational impact, and (c) if there is a need for SDI. (IDEA, 2004; Wright & Wright, 2017; WAC 392-172A-01035). Once the student is identified as eligible for special education, then further analysis is required to determine specific disability categories. Currently, IDEA identifies 14 categories of disability a special education student may fall under (2004). Specific Learning Disability and Other Health Impairment are two categories that are included in the disability list. While both these categories have social-emotional skills listed as a subcategory, students who fall under SLD or OHI may be identified as needing support in social-emotional skills. Once students are determined to need social-emotional skills support from SLD and OHI, then they will qualify for SDI in this area (IDEA, 2004; Wright & Wright, 2017).

Specially designed instruction. When students in special education have an IEP, the team must determine how to deliver services. While not all students with a disability require services in the area of social-emotional skills, there are those that do require specially designed instruction (SDI). SDI is instruction that is specially designed for the student that is evidence-based and requires explicit skills instruction (Horner, Sugai, & Fixsen, 2017). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004), defines SDI as

> adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that results from the child's disability; and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children. (para. 2)

Common SDI for students with social skills deficits include school-wide classroom supports, small group instruction, and direct instruction (Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Gresham, 2016; Kirby, 2017; Milligan, Phillips, & Morgan, 2016; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013; Shogren et al., 2014; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Students with disabilities who qualify for special education services require a disability and an IEP with goals before additional supports for SEL in special education can be conducted (IDEA, 2004; WAC, 2019).

Once a student is determined to require SDI, they are to be educated alongside general education peers to the maximum extent possible (IDEA, 2004; Solis et al., 2012). The phrasing "maximum extent possible" suggests that students should be included in the general education setting when possible, depending on students' needs as determined by the IEP team (Kirby, 2017; Vaughn et al., 1998). This is known as the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Solis et al., 2012). LRE indicates that 100% general education class placement is the least restrictive

placement for all children without disabilities, and is seldom recommended for students with an IEP without special education supports and services (NASET, 2019).

      Educational settings. A list of educational settings has been established on a scale from least to most restrictive. These include general education placement with consultation, general education placement with specialized services, coteaching with a special education teacher, resource room services, separate class with part-time participation in general education, full-time separate class, specialized school located in an alternative location, residential facilities, homebound, and finally hospital settings (NASET, 2019). These settings vary based on student needs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) students classified as having SLD or OHI spend the majority of their day, 80% or more, inside the general education classroom, whereas students diagnosed with Autism, a social, communication disorder, spend the majority of their day in the general education classroom 79% or less of the time (2019). Thus, indicating that students under the SLD and OHI category are spending the majority of their day in the general education classrooms, receiving instructional interventions through services such as consultation, coteaching, pull-out services, and push-in supports (Ford, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; NCES, 2019; Solis et al., 2012; WAC, 2019). The location of special education instruction is not determined based on the disability category, though sometimes categories can indicate specialized programs that address the needs of students with certain disabilities. For example, many states have specialized schools for the Blind or Deaf (Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013).

      Multi-tiered system of supports. While the identification of a disability is needed for the implementation of an IEP that addresses social-emotional instruction for students who have been determined to eligible for these services, many schools have already established and

developed school-wide supports that are designed to meet the needs of the general population (IDEA, 2004). These school-wide interventions are strategies that are intended to support the majority of the population, understanding that there are those that will require additional supports or services, and further establish a school culture of collaboration (Miller et al., 2011). Generally, School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are a three-tiered model of supports that address the academic and social behaviors of all students (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Shuster et al., 2017). Tier I or Primary Prevention starts with establishing, defining, and teaching positive behavior expectations, reinforcing positive behaviors, providing error correction, and general data collection on a school-wide level. Tier I is proactive and intended to address 80% of the target population. Tier II or Secondary Preventions are additional supports for 10–15% of students. Intervention strategies are intensive, frequent, and specific to small groups of students used in conjunction with Tier I strategies. These strategies can address academic or social performance. Tier III or Tertiary Prevention includes special education services as they are individualized but may also include any student who requires more intense individualized instruction, not only those that are labeled as disabled. Tier III interventions are intended for 5% or fewer students and include formal monitoring and implementation (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Miller et al., 2011). Effective models of PBIS establish positive school cultures and promote success in both academic and social performance (Shuster et al., 2017).

In addition to school-wide PBIS, many schools use another three-tiered model called Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is composed of intensive interventions, processes to identify, plan, and evaluate interventions, and data collection. RTI is used to systematically identify students with disabilities by implementing differentiated interventions and providing high-quality instruction which looks at academic outcomes (Robinson, 2017; Kirby, 2017;

Werts, Carpenter, & Fewell, 2014). Effective RTI models help to reduce disproportionality and help with the early identification of students with special needs (Boyle & Topping, 2012). School-wide models such as PBIS and RTI are interventions that are intended to reach and address all students, including those with disabilities. However, there are limitations to how these practices address students in special education. The levels of instruction within these school-wide models increase in intensity as the number of students impacted decreases. While tier three is similar to special education in practice, special education is a tier of its own. Indicating that once students are identified as needing special education services, they will receive additional and different educational practices which are separate from the RTI tier, and segregated from the PBIS tiers by participation. Therefore, while these students are differentiated by IEP's, SDI, and goals, they are also differentiated by access and participation within the school-wide interventions (Boyle & Topping, 2012; Miller et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2017; Robinson, 2017; Shuster et al., 2017; Werts et al., 2014).

Social-emotional curriculum. While PBIS is making strides in reaching out to address behavior problems school-wide, research shows students in special education may not always benefit from the program. For example, in a study done by Shuster et al., (2017), between 33% to 56% of students were not fully included in PBIS. They go on further to suggest that little is known about the actual involvement of students with disabilities across the nation. As schools address the importance of SEL for students, several curricula have been created to instruct students in social-emotional development. These curriculums include Second Steps, Making Choices, PATHS, Responsive Classroom, and RULER (Espelage, Rose, Polanin, Houchins, & Oakes, 2016; Low, Cook, Smolkowski, & Buntain-Ricklefs, 2015; Jones, Barnes, Bailey, & Doolittle, 2017). These curriculums show minimal impact on instructing students with

disabilities (What Works Clearinghouse, 2019). Therefore, specific and intensive instruction are recommended for those who qualify for special education services with social-emotional needs. In addition to more intensive instruction, often conducted in small groups, knowledgeable and trained teachers are needed to facilitate greater performance for students with disabilities. This professional is typically the special education teacher, as general education teachers receive different training and focus (Boyle & Topping, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2011). Therefore, current educational practices for students with disabilities have acknowledged the need and implementation of school-wide strategies and interventions, but also require additional strategies and curriculum to address SEL (Boyle & Topping, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012; Gartrell & Cairone, 2014; Fuchs & Fuchs, 20152012; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2011).

Social-emotional skills. Social-emotional skills are defined as prosocial behaviors such as self-regulation, positive peer relationships, social competence, emotional competence, problem-solving, self-management, and self-determination which lead to fostering responsible behaviors (Carter et al., 2011; Chao & Chou, 2017; Denham, Wyatt, Bassett, Echeverria, & Knox, 2009; Durlak et al., 2011; Espelage et al., 2016; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Gartrell & Cairone, 2014; Gresham, 2016; Ness & Middleton, 2012; Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016; Wehmeyer et al., 2012). Social skills of most concern for individuals with disabilities are the ability to self-manage, the ability to self-regulate, and the ability to appropriately interact with peers (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016; Korinek & Defur, 2016).

The term *self-regulation* refers to the ability of an individual to regulate their emotions and reactions in various social situations. Furthermore, self-regulation refers to the ability of an individual to modify their behaviors appropriately to social situations. In addition, self-regulation

is related to cognitive skills and motivation. Thus, indicating that behavior modifications are necessary to support instruction in self-regulation (Andrews, Houchins, & Varjas, 2017; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013). Those students who struggle with reading and math often struggle with self-regulation, as they lack the basic skills necessary to self-monitoring their behaviors. Students with SLD require more time and have poor organizational and management skills; therefore, these students require specific interaction and intensive direct instruction (Ness & Sohlberg, 2013).

The key components of positive social-emotional competence are evident in the student's ability to demonstrate flexible thinking and adjusting behaviors when interacting with others. This emotional competence is seen as successful when individuals can demonstrate the ability to read social cues and react to emotions through experience and understanding whereas the problem behaviors include internalizing emotions, such as anxiety, sadness, shyness, social withdrawal or worry and the, more aggressive behaviors such as disruptiveness and non-compliance. Basic self-regulation skills are described as the ability to manage emotions and control behaviors by refraining from interrupting (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). Peer acceptance and resilience are the skills necessary for positive social-emotional development (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Gartrell & Cairone, 2014).

The definition of learning disabilities by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities does not specifically include a reference to emotional problems, though researchers have implied that many students with academic struggles also have emotional difficulties (Emam & Kazem, 2015; Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016; Smith & Wallace, 2011). According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2015), over half of those with emotional difficulties were determined to be at risk for learning disabilities and exhibit externalizing behaviors. They also discovered that more boys

than girls were impacted. This impact may be contributed to maladjustment, poor interpersonal relationships, and externalizing behaviors. Emam and Kazem (2015) also found that teachers rated students who were at risk for learning disabilities, exhibited more externalizing behaviors than others. These behaviors thus have a negative impact on social performance and peer relationships.

A longitudinal study by Smith and Wallace (2011) compares the impact on social development for students diagnosed with ADHD and SLD. They discussed how students with these qualifying disabilities often had deficits in social skill development and questioned if there was a comorbidity of ADHD and SLD versus those with learning disabilities or attention deficit only. What they found was that those with comorbidity of ADHD and SLD possessed lower social skills abilities than those just diagnosed with SLD. They also found the comorbidity of those with ADHD and SLD versus those with ADHD only did not demonstrate a difference in social skills deficits. They concluded that these students should be provided with appropriate instruction to facilitate growth in their social skills development. Therefore, this disconnect fails to address the importance of social-emotional development among students with high-incidence disabilities (Smith & Wallace, 2011).

Early childhood education. There is merit in looking at early childhood education through the lens of special education, and how they intersect. Positive social and emotional development during childhood has been deemed crucial for adulthood. Several initiatives have been written to address social-emotional development for children, which influences educational policies. The Center on Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning describes early social-emotional development as a critical time when children from birth through five years of age are establishing positive relationships with others and emotional-regulation in appropriate way

within the context of their environment (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016, p. 8). Thus, suggesting addressing social-emotional deficits at an early age beneficial in increasing positive relationships and emotional-regulation skills. However, according to January, Casey, and Paulson (2011), the effectiveness of school interventions related to social-emotional development has a minimal effectiveness.

With a relationship between social-emotional deficits and academic deficits, early intervention is necessary (Emam & Kazem, 2015; Hibel & Jasper, 2012). The instructional strategies necessary at a young age for those with an identified disability are varied from those without, which is interesting when we focus so much on inclusion. When students are not identified as having deficits or labeled as disabled, they are not receiving the specialized instruction in social-emotional foundational skills, which are necessary for positive development (Hibel & Jasper, 2012). This indicates that while early intervention is necessary, those that are not identified early may not be benefitting from inclusive practice because the social-emotional strategies are not differentiated enough (Hibel & Jasper, 2012).

Generally, early intervention programs suggest that children are treated equally before they are diagnosed as having a disability (Hibel & Jasper, 2012). Consequently, Kirby (2017) states that students should be receiving individualized instruction regardless of disability, and thus change the prevalence of the exclusionary practices of special education. Hibel and Jasper (2012) discuss the importance of early identification of students with disabilities, suggesting that students should be identified and begin receiving intensive instruction as early as possible. These researchers go on further in promoting the idea that those identified as requiring special education services require different methods of instruction, and the one-size-fits-all does not work (Hibel & Jasper, 2012).

Fully inclusive instructional practices. Special education is providing SDI within the LRE for students who qualify for services. The SDI can include instructional intervention strategies provided in a variety of settings. However, current instructional practices are heavily dependent on a fully inclusive setting. Therefore, while 62.5% of students with disabilities are spending 80% or more of their time in the general education classroom, not all are content with this majority (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Ford (2013) suggests that fully inclusive environments do not address the needs of all students. Furthermore, Kirby (2017) recommends that full inclusion is a necessity, and segregation will only continue as long as the current sigma and perceptions of special education continues. Presently, the stigmas related to special education are negative attitudes by teachers related to inclusion, lack of confidence in instructing students with disabilities, and the medical definition of disability that implies there is something wrong with the student (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Kirby, 2017). However, in order for full inclusion to occur, labels should be removed, and all students should receive individualized instruction. Thus, changing special education to the standard and removing the stigma through equity and establishing acceptance for students with disabilities (Kirby, 2017).

Hence, full inclusion is where students with disabilities are instructed in the general education setting along-side typically developing peers (Kirby, 2017; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Contradictory, while full inclusion is promoted, it is often determined that students with special education needs have difficulties participating in the general education environment as many students have challenges with social interactions. Furthermore, some research suggests that students have fewer friends and lower self-esteem, others have found that those with special education needs are equitable to typically developing peers. When surveyed, many students with special needs felt they had fewer friends and had lower self-esteem than typically developing

peers (Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl, & Petry, 2011; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kirby, 2017; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Puckett et al., 2017).

Social-emotional interventions. An article by Vlachou and Stavroussi (2016) suggests that there are risks associated with social isolation and social competence skills of students with disabilities. This implies, that segregation of students into resource room setting for SEL, while direct and focused, can segregate students. However, it then becomes the responsibility of the general education teacher to implement prosocial opportunities and instruction within the general education setting. Specifically, the interactions of peers with and without disabilities requires successful and engaging social interactions with a variety of people and situations (Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016).

However, there are few special education interventions that focus on improving social skills for targeted populations (Gresham, 2016). According to Gresham (2016), a prominent social skills researcher in special education, there are not nearly enough social skills interventions for the variety of individuals within the special education population that truly addresses their unique and specific needs. Therefore, while there is a need for more evidence-based instructional interventions, researchers Vlachou, Stavroussi, and Didaskalou (2016) discuss that these interventions are promoting exclusion.

Students with social-emotional deficits. In the article written by Fuchs and Fuchs (2015) that references a prominent article from the 1980s that they claim is the basis for inclusive practices for students with disabilities, fails to differentiate between at-risk students and those with disabilities. This failure to determine the difference between the two groups does not take into account the necessity of additional instructional supports, specifically for students with social-emotional skills deficits. Therefore, students determined to have a disability under the

SLD and OHI category who are also faced with social-emotional skill deficits are often labeled as similar to low achievers and do not receive the same or intensive instructional attention at those with Autism who do have specialized programs and supports (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015).

    Instructional intervention strategies. Instructional intervention strategies are defined as the way in which instruction is delivered. This includes the content of instruction, the process in which instruction is delivered, and the products related to instruction. Therefore, instructional strategies are different from instructional practices. Consequently, instructional intervention strategies implemented by teachers within the LRE for a student can be problematic. Evaluating materials and finding evidence-based practices is challenging. With a variety of criteria that determines the successfulness of instructional intervention strategies, which are based on the unique and individual needs of students, claiming one intervention works well for some may not mean it works for all students. However, teachers must use multiple methods of instruction to reach all of their students (Freeman & Sugai, 2013; Horner et al., 2017). Therefore, while social-emotional development for children with disabilities requires direct instruction, small groupings, and specific skill instruction, the promotion of fully inclusive practices do not address how these instructional intervention strategies can be implemented within the general education setting (Kirby, 2017).

    Problem-solving intervention strategies can benefit and increase self-advocacy for students through structured and explicit examples. Therefore, while inclusion is preferred, resource room settings with a special education teacher allow for small group instruction, and as has been successful. There are, however, deficits in generalization skills, and students are unable to demonstrate skill mastery outside of controlled situations. Specific supports and continued practice should be maintained after resource room supports are stopped (Vlachou & Stavroussi,

2016). According to Cote, Pierce, Higgins, Miller, Tandy, and Sparks (2010), problem-solving skills necessary for peer interactions can be taught in the general education setting when role-playing is used. Role-playing can be conducted in the general education setting and promotes generalization and skill acquisition (Cote et al., 2010). In addition to role-playing, social stories and video modeling are effective instructional strategies used in instructing students with social skills deficits and can be implanted in a variety of settings (Halle, Ninness, Ninness & Lawson, 2016; Holmqvist Olander & Burman, 2013; Sani Bozkurt & Vuran, 2014).

In addition, high-quality instruction is necessary to promote student success (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Explicit instruction of social skills is important and beneficial because many students lack the necessary social skills needed for success (Montalbano & Warzel, 2012). Students are typically taught to improve academic skills, but they also need social skills instruction. However, when social skills instruction is conducted in small groups outside of the general education classroom, students fail to demonstrate the ability to generalize the skills taught. This is further challenged by fewer opportunities for exposure, repeated practice, and extending the curriculum to multiple settings (Marquez, Marquez, Vincent, Pennefather, & Sprague, 2014).

Instructional intervention practices. Currently, many students with high-incidence disabilities with social skills deficits are instructed in one of two ways. One is by receiving intensive small group instruction in a resource room setting, with students with similar disabilities (January et al., 2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013). Utilizing small groups is more effective in implementing direct and focused instruction. However, generalization and maintenance of skills learned in this setting are found to be difficult (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Gresham, 2015; January et al., 2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Ness &

Sohlberg, 2013). The second method utilizes consultation, coteaching, and push-in supports implemented within the general education classroom alongside typically developing peers. With the push for inclusion, many researchers are suggesting that resource room settings are unnecessary and ineffective. However, while generalization is possible, there are difficulties with implementing intensive, high-quality instruction with repeated practice in a fully inclusive setting (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Solis et al., 2012). That is to say that while both methods have benefits, they also present challenges (January et al., 2011; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Ness & Sohlberg, 2013; Robinson, 2017).

A meta-analysis of school-wide social skills interventions by January et al., (2011) addressed that instructional practices are necessary and contribute to student success when it is implemented at a young age. Again, indicating early intervention is necessary for success; however, they also found that there was a minimal influence on social skill performance for targeted populations. Thus, suggesting that multiple exposure, targeted interventions, and intensive practices are necessary, as there was a positive impact on social skills development when students were exposed to more frequent interventions. While socioeconomic status was not a significant indicator of the intervention strategy, those with lower socioeconomic status benefited from better instructional practices in the area of social skills development (January et al., 2011).

Consequently, many instructional practices are filled with limitations and inadequacies for students with learning disabilities. When reviewed, students with learning disabilities were 3.4 years below in reading and 3.2 below in math. This was determined to be because many schools did not provide intensive instruction because they did not know how to provide it. There was a similarity between low achievers and those with a learning disability label, which does not

address the need for special education services. Public policy has promoted full inclusion for all students, including those with learning disabilities, which consequently promoted some to call an end to resource rooms and self-contained classes (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015). However, it is unclear if these motivations to end resource rooms is because students would no longer be segregated by disability category, or if full inclusion is actually a better alternative for students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015). Fuchs and Fuchs (2015) indicate that inclusion models such as coteaching, consultation, and push-in supports are not evidence-based.

However, other researchers suggest that in order for fully inclusive models to work, social skills instruction should be embedded within reading, mathematics, and other academic subjects (Miller et al., 2011; Womack, Marchant, & Borders, 2011). According to Bossaert et al., (2011) and Womack et al., (2011) to specifically support our students with learning disabilities it is important that they receive their social skills instruction in the general education classroom alongside same-aged peers. This is contradictory to Gresham, Sugai, and Horner (2001), indicating that the setting in which instruction is conducted is not the same as addressing the skill deficit. It has been established that social skills are maintained in a variety of ways and within different environments. A student who struggles with the acquisition of skills is different from students that struggle with performance. Generally, those with social skill deficits are typically instructed in small group lessons, with varied aged peer groups, which is not intended for all learners (Gresham et al., 2001).

Embedded social skills instruction. Customarily, literacy instruction has become the focus of our American Education system, with daily reading instruction at the public-school level, on average of 9 hours per week at the third-grade elementary level (NCES, 2019). Therefore, utilizing the embedding of focused classroom management and specific social skills

lessons can support our more struggling learners (Womack, Marchant, & Borders, 2011). Ford (2013) discusses how a student with learning disabilities should be educated in inclusive classrooms, specifically for social skills, as pull-out resource rooms do not address the key skills needed. However, Gresham (2016) indicates that resource rooms provide direct instruction of skills needed for those identified disabilities, and it is only the generalization of skills that cannot be embedded within the resource room setting (Gresham, 2016).

  Social-emotional skills instructional strategies. The most effective strategies used in social-emotional skills instruction include modeling, coaching, and reinforcing procedures and are conducted frequently and for extended periods. Gresham (2016) also suggests intervention strategies should include modeling, rehearsing feedback, coaching, and small-group settings, which is different from other researchers' suggestions of using inclusion. Therefore, while initial social skills instruction should be taught in small groups, generalization and maintenance should be conducted in the natural setting in which social skill behaviors are to occur, indicating that both small group instruction and inclusion are beneficial for instructing students in social skill development (Gresham et al., 2001; Miller et al., 2011).

  Another social-emotional skills instructional strategy for students with high-incidence disabilities is self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning is an intervention strategy that is used in the inclusive classroom to support students' learning for students with high-incidence disabilities to improve self-regulation and improve academic performance (Ness & Middleton, 2012). The idea is that teaching self-regulation should be cyclical. Students are instructed on planning, performance, and self-evaluation. This strategy can be modified and accommodated to meet the needs of the students, but it is an intervention that works inside the general education classroom. It is designed to be an inclusive intervention and not an intervention that is taught as a

pull-out service within a separate setting. The data indicated that students on-task behaviors increased as well for engagement. However, generalization did not appear to change over the duration of the intervention. Ness and Middleton (2012) indicated that educators should continue to teach strategies to target behaviors, observe in context, and use inclusive education as an effective intervention for students with disabilities; however, they further concluded that this strategy is not effective for everyone.

Social skills training (SST) is another instructional strategy that has not produced huge results but has been used to promote success in teaching social skills. As many students with disabilities have deficits in interpersonal relationships, SST has been used to improve these skills. However, SST has not been determined to be a quality intervention, as it is not socially important, or generalizable (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Socially important outcomes include peer acceptance and friendships, the main component of interpersonal relationships. In order to instruct students with disabilities in social skills development, effective evidence-based practices are used, these practices include video modeling, peer mentoring, technology-aided instruction, and social narratives (Puckett, Mathur, & Zamora, 2017; WWC, 2019). These strategies can be conducted within the general education or resource room settings. There are a few specialized curriculums used within the general education classroom to promote social-emotional development and social skills instruction (Kavale & Mostert, 2004; Low et al., 2015; WWC, 2019). A few of these curriculums include:

- Choices, Choices and Right Choices,
- A Social Skills Program for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities (ASSET),
- PALS: Problem-Solving and Affective Learning Strategies,
- Skillstreaming,

- Second Steps,

- Toward Affective Development (TAD),

- Walker Social Skills Curriculum, and

- The ACCEPTS Program.

However, while these curriculums and strategies are used on a school-wide level. Kavale and Mostert, (2004), determined minimal success for students with disabilities in the general education setting, as success was related to individual students and teachers.

  School culture. Many factors contribute to the effectiveness of social skills instructional strategies, the instructional intervention practices used, and the selection of LRE in which students receive instruction. One of these factors is school culture. School culture is influenced by a school's common philosophy (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Strogilos et al., 2012). Consequently, when the staff demonstrates collaboration and teamwork, these schools are more successful in implementing inclusive practices. Thus, in turn, promotes effective collaboration, which is reflective of a school that promotes inclusion. For inclusive practices such as coteaching, collaboration, and push-in supports, common planning time is necessary. When teachers do not have time to plan and align lessons, pull-out services are used as an alternative to inclusion (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). However, pull-out services are also reflective of individual students' needs and the least restrictive environment options. Some school climates use pull-out services, push-in supports, or consultation because coteaching cannot happen in all classrooms (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013). Reasons for pull-out services can be dependent on individual student's needs, lack of space for coteaching to occur, or school philosophy (Gavish, 2017a). In addition, adequate

time, funding, and resources are necessary for consultation, coteaching, push-in supports, and pull-out services (Banks et al., 2015; Sakiz, 2017; Strogilos et al., 2012).

Challenges for a school to effectively implement inclusive practices is related to school culture. Schools that promoted professional development and shared planning time along with inclusive practices are more successful in their implementation (Kang et al., 2015; Amr et al., 2016; Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Cote et al., 2010; Cote et al., 2014; Robinson, 2017; Solis et al., 2012). Schools that lack funding, have a poor infrastructure, and lack of support or resources are ill-equipped to implement inclusive practices, often resulting in the use of resource room settings to implement instruction for students with disabilities (Amr et al., 2016; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kang et al., 2015; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013; Solis et al., 2012). Thus overall, school culture is related to the teacher, principals, and student population when teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion, social integration, or coteaching a school is likely to work towards more inclusive practices (Urton, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014).

Teacher experience and knowledge. Another attribute of effective instructional social skills instruction is related to teachers' experience level. High-quality instruction is not related to setting itself, but typically special education teachers are trained in instructing explicitly to the needs of the students, which contributes to the quality of instruction taught by these teachers (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). McLeskey and Waldron (2011) determined that academic improvements can be made with high-quality instruction in both settings; however, fully inclusive environments do not allow for as intensive instructional needs. Generally, there is a greater significance on academic gains for those instructed in separate settings.

Myers et al. (2017) suggest that a supportive classroom environment addresses social competence. However, many special education and general education teachers do not receive

adequate training in classroom management, which is necessary for a supportive environment. Classroom management is focused on establishing routines and expectations. In addition to providing students with specific praise for demonstrating appropriate behaviors, explicit examples for both what is acceptable and unacceptable are necessary, indicating more experience and knowledge are necessary for implementation. Overall, there is a correlation between student engagement in quality instruction and student behaviors. (Montalbano & Warzel, 2012; Myers et al., 2017).

Within the topic of experience, newer teachers typically enter the education system with the philosophy of inclusive practices, while older experienced teachers are less knowledgeable on the current trends, or ideas. Frequent and reoccurring participation in professional development becomes necessary to develop knowledge and skills. Therefore, while there is professional development that addresses inclusive practices; often, this can come too late to change teaching philosophies (Ajuwon, Laman, & Earle, 2014). In addition, there is an increased expectation that prepares new teachers for inclusive practices; training impacts the philosophies for coteaching and collaboration. So, while preservice education programs instruct in inclusive instructional, not all training programs are the same (Ajuwon et al., 2014; Robinson, 2017). Therefore, while preservice instructors are trained to promote inclusive practices, the school culture impacts how the instruction occurs for students with high-incidence disabilities.

Researchers Shogren, Plotner, Palmer, Wehmeyer, and Paek, (2014) suggest that successful social skills instruction, which includes both self-determination and self-regulation, be intensive and direct. However, researchers have also found that teachers are not confident in their abilities to teach self-determination. This becomes a challenge for successful social skills instruction as a teacher needs to be conducting lessons frequently, throughout the day, within

various contexts. Consequently, Shogren et al. (2014) also found that students benefited from this intensive and direct instruction regardless of disability labels.

Disposition. Addressing the topic of disposition is necessary when looking at perceptions. Disposition is a person's personality traits, beliefs, and conduct (King-Sears et al., 2012; Wadlington & Wadlington, 2011). According to Wadlington and Wadlington (2011), special education teachers have dispositions where they prefer to work with students in one-on-one or small group settings, while general education teachers prefer working with larger groups in faster-paced settings. In addition, they suggest that further research on the effects of disposition on instructional practices (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2011). However, authors LePage, Nielsen, and Fearn, (2008) indicate that there are a number of studies that discuss attitudes towards inclusion.

Teacher attitudes toward inclusion are well researched and indicate that teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion. However, when teachers have a negative attitude toward inclusion, this becomes a barrier (Kirby, 2017; Sharma & Sokal, 2016). Overall, attitudes favor inclusion even when there is disagreement on students with disabilities making gains or engaging in learning (Tabassum, Kiyani, Chuadhry, & Kiyani, 2014). Many general education teachers feel unprepared to instruct all students including those with disabilities, claiming more training is needed (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Kang et al., 2015; Solis et al., 2012).

Therefore, while special education and general education teachers understand the ethics behind inclusive practices, many may still offer special opportunities for students with disabilities, such as allowing them to stay in the classroom at recess to avoid negative attention from peers (Robinson, 2017). In addition, many teachers are faced with conflicting philosophies

on how to instruct students with special needs. One attitude is that students with special needs require specialized, high-quality instruction that is focused on their individual needs, while others promote full inclusion regardless of instructional practices. Thus, suggesting that educators must choose between full inclusion or high-quality instruction in an alternative setting, as the implementation of both at the same time is difficult (Robinson, 2017). Teacher influences on the SEL development of their students are dependent on a teacher's own social competence and ability to build and maintain quality relationships with professionals, families, and students (Breeman et al., 2015; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wang et al., 2016).

Studies have been conducted that address motivations for teaching for preservice and first-year teachers, addressing teacher preparation programs and teacher attitudes and beliefs (Conderman & Walker, 2015; Dingle, Falvey, Givner, & Haager, 2004; LePage et al., 2008). These studies ask if first-year teachers are prepared for the difficult task of instructing students, both with and without special needs. They found that first-year teachers are well versed in the topic of inclusion and enter the school environment with a philosophy of inclusion despite current practices. These teachers are then faced with the challenge of changing the status quo so that all parties get along (Conderman & Walker, 2015; Dingle et al., 2004; LePage et al., 2008). Welch et al., (2010) describe teacher dispositions as genuinely motivated to help all students learn, and equality is based on need.

A global world-view of inclusion. Over the last four decades, inclusion has been a global topic in education. On the subject of this, the global philosophy is that inclusion is the most effective method of instruction to increase performance for students regardless of disability (Kochhar, Taymans, & West, 2000). Furthermore, the United States continues to promote inclusion, which has other countries looking for ways to meet these practices. With this in mind,

many countries are still faced with the challenge of basic human rights. Whereas the United States and other countries mandate the education of all students, other countries such as Hong Kong do not have such requirements (Poon-Mcbrayer, Wong, 2013). Additionally, many are beginning to have a new understanding of equality, and inclusive education will be beneficial in promoting this equality. In short, changes are necessary for the implementation of inclusive practice on a global level (Banks et al., 2015; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Elder, 2015; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Poon-Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013; Sakiz, 2017; Uysal & Ergenekon, 2010).

Countries like Thailand, Norway, South Korea, Ghana, Hong Kong, and Ireland are actively working towards a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities, in order that students are included in the general education settings when possible. However, they continue to face the challenges of public opinion and attitudes, proper instructional methods, and teacher attitudes towards inclusion (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Bubpha, 2014; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Gyimah, Sugden, & Pearson, 2009; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Kang et al., 2015). Thus, limiting the successfulness of fully inclusive environments. According to Poon-Mcbrayer and Wong (2013), all students have a right to an education in a setting that supports learning, inclusion, and success. They go on further to discuss how culture, partnerships through shared vision, school culture, clear communication, positive teacher relationships, empowering leaders and accepting challenges, promote inclusive practices in education. Whereas Uysal and Ergenekon (2010) found that teachers in a private special education institution in Turkey believed they were ineffectively educating students due to the inability to generalize skills within a natural environment, which include typically developing peers.

So, while inclusion may be preferred, not all schools have reached this level, and there are still challenges. Researcher, Bubpha (2014), in Thailand, agreed with the multilevel approach of instructional practices for students with disabilities, offering pull out services, and push-in supports varied by individuals. There are still other challenges related to effective inclusion. This includes inadequate resources, cultural beliefs, and limited training (Poon-Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013). A positive relationship between teachers and students is another influence on student academics and behavior outcomes (Poulou, 2017). This again reiterates that inclusive practices are beneficial, but have challenges for individual students.

According to the United Nations adaptation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) "persons with disabilities are not excluded for the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability" (United Nations, 2006, p. 15). Kenya's constitution goes on further to state, "A person with any disability is entitled to access educational instructions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person." (Constitution of Kenya, 2010 p. 37). Kenya's education is addressing education as a right and should be an opportunity for all to be educated. However, there is still a high number of students not attending school at all in countries like Kenya, Turkey, and Sri Lanka (Elder, 2015; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Uysal & Ergenekon, 2010). This is to say that the cultural philosophy and traditions in countries like Kenya suggest are that a person with a disability is cursed. Therefore, it has been a challenge to change attitudes toward equality in education for all (Elder, 2015).

Therefore, while some countries are faced with the challenge of basic equality for students with disabilities, governmental organizations within the Kenyan government have established funds and supports to address the education of all children, their next step would then address methods in which instructional practices benefited all children. In addition to this, developing countries are faced with other issues that are at stake in determining educational equality. These countries must also work to eradicate poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving health care, combating disease, and sustaining the environment. They may find that full inclusion is not possible, and will change over time to become more inclusive, with varied strategies for those with disabilities versus those without (Elder, 2015; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Uysal & Ergenekon, 2010).

While policies are written to promote equality for those with a disability, these laws are not having enough of an impact on educating students with disabilities in developing countries. In Kenya, in 2011 only 37% of students with disabilities were receiving a primary education. Though the calculations are not exact, the lack of appropriate education for students with disabilities is evident (Elder, 2015). In addition to previous cultural norms, many communities are not fully invested in total inclusion. Including all students in education has proven to be difficult based on attitudes and beliefs, which brings up other inequalities within the education system. Therefore, while there is an inequality in the education system, they are also faced with the challenge of social perceptions and how students with disabilities should be educated (Elder, 2015; Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014; Uysal & Ergenekon, 2010).

In an interpretive study from New Delhi, India, teachers indicated that inclusive practices of coteaching or consultation are a "western idea" or philosophy that while it sounds good, in practice is simply not possible or likely. In order to follow western philosophy, legislation,

policies, funding, and perceptions need to change (Tiwari, Das, & Sharma, 2015). This same

attitude is noted in Greece, where teachers note the usefulness of inclusion, but feel unprepared

and reluctant to implement these practices. Therefore, schools are reluctant to change even if

there is some evidence of the success of inclusion (Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015; Tiwari et al.,

2015).

Review of Methodological Issues

The topic of social skills instruction in special education is complex. Upon review of the

studies used for this literature review, there was a mix of both qualitative and quantitative

research (Harrison et al., 2019; Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011; Magnusson, 2016; Park,

Dimitrov, Das, & Gichuru, 2016; Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenbark, & Little, 2015;

Gresham, 2015; Poon-Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013; Strogilos et al., 2012; Tiwari et al., 2015).

However, studies that looked at school culture or teacher perceptions were generally qualitative

case study design, using both interpretive and descriptive design (Beacham & Rouse, 2012;

Breeman et al., 2015; Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Poulou, 2017;

Strogilos et al., 2012; Tiwari et al., 2015). Studies that addressed social skills interventions and

social skills development in special education used randomized control trials (Gresham, 2015;

Wehmeyer, Shogren, Palmer, Williams-Diehm, Little, & Boulton, 2012). While single-subject

research design was indicated as the most complex, it is the suggested design when determining

and evaluating special education interventions (Freeman & Sugai, 2013).

A few studies that did look at perceptions of general education and special education

teachers utilized case study design (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Breeman et al., 2015; Burke &

Sutherland, 2004; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Harrison et al., 2019; Poulou, 2017). A case study is

used to explore contemporary, real-life situations (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, case study research was selected for this study because it is used to explore real-life situations and answer questions. When researchers use survey and questionnaire data to understand further how perspectives influence practice, there is limited control over the results (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

In order to study the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologist on the phenomenon of social skills instructional intervention practices within the LRE and how school culture and teacher experience and knowledge, influence these special education practices, case study research is the best choice as it will provide an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon. A case study usually depends on multiple sources of information in order to get a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being explored. A descriptive case study research design was used to understand the perspectives of three important stakeholders whose views and experience of instructional interventions for students with SLD or OHI will shed light on the phenomenon.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Schools today are making a concerted effort in addressing reading, writing, and math instruction in order to meet the needs of over 6% of students that are impacted by SLD and OHI. However, a limited effort is put in addressing social-emotional development for these students (NCES, 2019; Emam & Kazem, 2015; Korinek & Defur, 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). Effective development of social-emotional skills is necessary for the implementation of inclusive practices, transition to adult life, and academic success. Therefore, while most educational practices address academic instruction, issues around students with social-emotional needs are gaining both international and national attention. While inclusive practices are becoming standard for instruction in both academic and social skills development, research indicates that differentiated

needs be considered rather than standardization of instructional practices (Elder, 2015; Poon-

Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013; Vlachou et al., 2016).

These standardized inclusive practices generally indicate that students should be educated

in the general education environment. However, there are other indicators that address pull-out

settings, such as resource rooms are effective solutions for social skills development in students

with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Furthermore, there are few social skills

instructional strategies that have been determined to be effective in either location. Social skills

instruction can be effective when they are intensive in nature and through explicit task

instructions (Montalbano & Warzel, 2012). However, the problem becomes when students are

asked to apply what they learned in the classroom to a more generalized setting. Researchers

have found that once a skill was learned, generalization of those skills within an alternative

setting was minimal (Ness & Sohlberg, 2013; Miller et al., 2011). Thus, research suggests that

students benefited from basic skill instruction outside of the classroom in a segregated setting,

with follow up support within the general education setting that supports the generalization of

skills once the skills have been mastered. Again, this strategy appears to promote a varied

approach to teaching, and not all or nothing approach of inclusion that some schools promote.

The research indicates that specific social skill development strategies used are related to school

culture, teacher experience, and knowledge (Amr et al., 2016; Banks, Frawley, & Mccoy, 2015;

Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Cote et al., 2010; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kang et al., 2015; McLeskey &

Waldron, 2011; Montalbano & Warzel, 2012; Myers et al., 2017; Robinson, 2017; Sakiz, 2017;

Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Solis et al., 2012; Welch et al., 2010). These elements determine which

practices are used and promoted.

Recruiting qualified special education teachers is a challenge. Thus, general education teachers are often called upon to teach students with SLD and OHI needs. There are several instructional practices that have been discussed in the literature, namely consult, coteaching, push-in supports, and pull-out services. The experience of a teacher is related to the setting in which any student learns (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011) Generally, a teacher that is able to create a supportive classroom environment is able to influence the instructional practices. For example, general education teachers who receive more training often have more experience working with a variety of students. However, new teachers are receiving the most current up-to-date training, which focuses on inclusionary practices and is said to promote a supportive classroom (Myers et al., 2017; Park et al., 2016). This is to say that experience influences the instructional practices in the classroom. Expertise can come from classroom instruction, professional development, and preservice education. Providing appropriate instructional practices does relate to experience in so much as teachers who understand their students' needs are better able to instruct on those needs. More experienced teachers also have strategies for utilizing planning time and can focus on students' needs (Cahill & Mitra, 2008). Teachers who are new to a school setting may not be aware of the school-wide interventions or specific classroom interventions that general education teachers are using. (Cahill & Mitra, 2008). This lack of knowledge typically leads to students with disabilities being educated in a separate setting, regardless of an inclusive philosophy promoted by preservice programs (Gavish, 2017b).

It would be ideal to have special education teachers that receive specialized knowledge and skills from preservice training to be teaching all students with special needs. However, as noted earlier, experienced and qualified special education teachers are difficult to recruit, and the situation is further complicated by the difficulty of recruiting for coteaching teams. There are

few teachers prepared and willing to jump into a coteaching environment (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). Qualified, experienced teachers are better prepared to use multiple approaches across settings and have knowledge of a variety of effective instructional practices for students (Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Tabassum et al., 2014). Therefore, teachers with more experience may be better prepared to make changes to school culture and implement practices that are related to current school culture, which inexperienced teachers may not be able to do (Ajuwon et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a teacher's attitude can contribute to implementing instructional practices. For example, teachers who have positive thoughts on inclusion are better able to implement inclusion practices. However, teachers must also have a willingness and respect for the team to implement these practices (Cahill & Mitra, 2008). When changes in teams occur, some teachers may change in their stance on how to implement these instructional practices indicating a collaborative relationship between professionals is necessary (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). This is further challenged in coteaching environments as not all teachers can work together the same (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). Hence, while inclusion is promoted, so are building and maintaining relationships with students. These relationships are often better established in a resource room setting where staff can focus on individual students to a greater degree (Robinson, 2017).

School culture is defined as how schools builds relationships with staff, students, and community, and how that relationship is maintained. Schools that use PBIS and RTI have established these strategies that are designed to address all student learning (Miller et al., 2011; Poon-Mcbrayer & Wong, 2013; Shuster et al., 2017; Werts et al., 2014). The importance of school culture is when all stakeholders, regardless of title, share a common philosophy on

education. When professionals are able to collaborate, this improves both school climate and student achievement (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Sakiz, 2017). Schools that understand the importance of each stakeholder are able to schedule and allow for common planning time and recruit qualified professionals, which in turn benefits student achievement (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). However, with fewer special education teachers than general education teachers, not all students will benefit from common planning time, as the special education teacher must be divided among multiple classes (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013; Myers et al., 2017).

Schools that implement intensive small group instruction often have a shared philosophy of learning (Boyle & Topping, 2012). This philosophy is to address student outcomes, and use of evidence-based instructional practices, however, many schools are unable to implement consistent or effective practices due to lack of supports, resources, time, money, and space (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Gavish, 2017a). This is then further complicated by schools with poor infrastructure (Amr et al., 2016; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kang et al., 2015; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013; Solis et al., 2012). The attitudes of the community, teachers, and staff directly impact the school culture and use of instructional practices (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015).

Critique of Previous Research

Holistic education is an educational philosophy that acknowledges the need to educate the whole child. Thus, addressing both the educational and social development of our students. As students with disabilities rise, SEL becomes even more important (Choi et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011; Kirby, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Zuckerbrod, 2018). Many of our students under the disability categories of SLD and OHI require specific social-emotional skills instruction to

address their deficits. However, with the implementation of school-wide interventions and the limited involvement of students with disabilities in these practices, many of our students with disabilities are not receiving the explicit instructional interventions necessary to affect performance (Gresham, 2015). As schools address SEL for students and promote inclusionary practices for students with SLD or OHI where the majority of students spend 80% or more of their day in the general education setting there are limited interventions for our tier three population (Horner & Sugai, 2015; NCES, 2019; Shuster et al., 2017). While inclusionary practices are promoted, the research indicates that separate settings can be effective for many students so, while inclusion is a popular topic of debate, understanding how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge impact instructional interventions related to social-emotional development used in the school setting (Ford, 2013).

There is a problem in educational institutions in the United States. That problem, specifically, is that students with disabilities under the disability categories of SLD and OHI are not receiving adequate instruction in social skills development. Currently, there are four main philosophies in the instruction of students with disabilities. These philosophies are consultation of the special education teacher with the general education teacher, coteaching, push-in supports provided by paraprofessionals or special education teachers, and pull-out services in a separate location. The current focus within these four practices has been to include students to the greatest extent possible (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). So, while inclusion is promoted, students with disabilities are unique in their needs and require a variety of environments and strategies to address social skills development. However, there are other factors that contribute to the instructional practices of students with disabilities. Furthermore, there are few curriculum or strategies that specifically

address social skills instruction for students with disabilities within the general education setting (Choi et al., 2017What Works Clearinghouse, 2019). Consequently, school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge play a critical part in which instructional practices will be utilized in instructing students with disabilities (Ajuwon, et al., 2014; Montalbano & Warzel, 2012; Myers et al., 2017; Robinson, 2017).

Subsequently, there is limited research on SEL for students with high-incidence disabilities. This is further complicated by not enough information on the perspectives of the general education teacher, special education teacher, and school psychologist as it relates to social skills interventions. There are numerous research studies related to the implementation and attitudes of inclusive practices; however, this research focuses primarily on reading and math instruction, or students with Autism (Choi et al., 2017; McLeskey et al., 2014; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Overall, there is limited research on teacher perceptions in how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge play a role in how inclusive practices are conducted (Vlachou, Stavroussi, & Didaskalou, 2016).

Chapter 2 Summary

Students identified as having an SLD or an OHI can have social-emotional deficits. When these students are receiving SDI within the LRE determined by the IEP team, they can receive instructional intervention practices in a variety or combination of methods. These methods include consultation of professionals with the general education teacher and special education teacher, coteaching with general education and special education teachers, push-in supports of special education teachers, specialists, or paraprofessionals supporting students in the general education classroom, and pull-out services which includes special education teachers or other professionals removing students from the general education setting (Gresham et al., 2001;

Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013; Strogilos, & Stefanidis, 2015). These four methods are practices that promote the LRE in which students are educated alongside typically developing peers to the maximum extent possible. While these methods are location specific, instructional intervention practices can be conducted in a variety of environments. These environments are a continuum of placements with a variable degree of inclusion, from fully inclusive to specialized schools.

For the purpose of this study inclusive practices include both fully inclusive methods of instruction and pull-out services (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). To be described as inclusive, pull-out services should be limited in duration and generally for no more than 80% of the student's day. Inclusive practices are methods of instructing students with limited time removed from the general education setting. Fully inclusive practices do not include pull-out services; however, the instructional intervention practices have been determined to have a strong impact on student outcomes, indicating that the instructional intervention practices are more important than the environment in which students receive the instruction (Horner & Sugai, 2015; NCES, 2019; Shuster et al., 2017). Instructional intervention strategies are techniques in the delivery of instruction that includes modeling, coaching, and reinforcing procedures, which should include direct instruction, high-quality instruction, and instruction presented by qualified and trained staff (Freeman & Sugai, 2013; Gresham, 2016; Kirby, 2017).

In addition to instructional practices, a culture of collaboration is essential to effective school culture. School culture is influenced by philosophy and dedication to collaboration, which further includes trust, environment, communication, and community (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007). Schools that promote collaboration and allow time for effective communication, students' needs are better addressed. These schools are able to address instructional practices and

strategies that are necessary for student growth (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). Schools that promote collaboration as the school culture are more effective (Amr et al., 2016; Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Cote et al., 2010; Kang et al., 2015; Solis et al., 2012; Robinson, 2017). However, even when collaboration is valued schools with low funds, and poor infrastructure face challenges with implementing effective instructional practices (Amr et al., 2016; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Kang et al., 2015; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013; Solis et al., 2012). Therefore, school culture is related to attitudes and perceptions (Urton et al., 2014).

Teacher experience contributes to the high-quality instruction presented by teachers. More experienced teachers tend to have more strategies for educating students with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Generally, new teachers enter the education system with the philosophy of consolation, coteaching, and push-in supports, while more experienced teachers have less knowledge of fully inclusive practices (Ajuwon et al., 2014). Furthermore, teachers who have received training in instructing students with disabilities in social-emotional development are better equipped to facilitate high-quality direct instruction (Ajuwon et al., 2014; Robinson, 2017; Shogren et al., 2014).

Consequently, while teacher experience and knowledge may influence instructional practices, so may a teacher's perception (King-Sears et al., 2012; Wadlington & Wadlington, 2011). Generally, a teacher's attitude can promote or hinder the instructional practices implemented for students with disabilities (Kirby, 2017; Sharma & Sokal, 2016). Thus, a teacher's perception of ability in instructing students with disabilities can contribute to the effectiveness of instructional practices and implementation of strategies (Breeman et al., 2015; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wang et al., 2016;). Therefore, while there are several key stakeholders involved in a student with disabilities education, it is important to address how these

professionals are determining the setting, instructional intervention practices, and intervention strategies in educating students with social-emotional deficits. This study will look at the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence social skills instructional practices and strategies in the LRE (Bowers et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2016).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Special education is a complex and growing field of education. In 2014–2015, 13.2% of the students, age 3 to 21 received special education services (NCES, 2019). Not only are many of these students receiving services in academic areas but in social-emotional development as well. Only recently, schoolwide initiatives designed to address SEL for all students have been established, with some states addressing the need for SEL benchmarks and practices for all students (CASEL, 2018). However, much of the current controversy in the field of special education is related to inclusive practices and determining the LRE for students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015). Generally, students with disabilities should be included to the greatest extent possible in the general education setting alongside typically developing peers (IDEA, 2004; Solis et al., 2012). However, research-based practices indicate small group instructional practice by knowledgeable skilled professionals produces higher outcomes than setting alone (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Furthermore, students with disabilities encounter a variety of professionals who make decisions about their learning. The three key stakeholders are responsible for evaluating, monitoring, and instructing students with disabilities are special education teachers, general education teachers, and the school psychologists. There is little information or research done on how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence social-emotional instructional intervention practices within the LRE for students with SLD and OHI disabilities. When determining the LRE for elementary students with high-incident disabilities there are two ways in which social-emotional development instruction can be delivered. One way is for the student to be instructed in the general education setting through three different instructional practices. These practices are coteaching, consultation, and push-in supports, which can be implemented

with both a special education teacher and general education teacher, though with consultation and push-in supports the general education teacher conducts much of the instruction. Second is the practice of removing students from the general education setting into mall groups outside of the classroom where instruction is provided under the guidance of the special education teacher. Generally, special education teachers receive specific training in educating students on social-emotional development, whereas general education teachers do not (Ajuwon et al., 2014; Robinson, 2017; Shogren et al., 2014). Thus, indicating a difference in instruction ability on the part of the teachers.

To further understand social-emotional instructional intervention practices within the LRE for students with high-incidence disabilities, it is necessary to address the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists who work directly with children with these high-incidence disabilities. The perspectives of these three stakeholders was explored in how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge contribute to social-emotional instructional intervention practices. Through this study, the researcher sought to understand how social-emotional instructional practices are determined. Hence, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by drawing attention to and begin discussions on how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence the social-emotional instructional intervention practices used for students with social-emotional deficits, subsequently addressing inclusive practices, setting, and LRE.

Research Questions

Main question. What are the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the practices of social skills instructional interventions within the least restrictive environment?

Subquestion 1. How does school culture influence perceptions of special education, general education teachers, and school psychologists as it relates to social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Subquestion 2. How does experience and knowledge of special education, general education teachers, and school psychologists influence perceptions of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study is to explore the perspectives of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the influence of school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge when determining and implementing social-emotional instructional intervention practices within the LRE. The findings of this study will provide opportunities for further discussion and to explore what is currently happening in the field by exploring the different perspectives of the three key stakeholders.

In qualitative research, the researcher is describing non-numerical data, which answers questions as to the "how" or "why" of a real-life phenomenon (Yin, 2018). This study used a qualitative case study design. A case study is used when the researcher has limited control on behaviors, unlike quantitative research with tries to control the context (Yin, 2018). Qualitative case study design also allows the information to be viewed through a variety of perspectives to understand the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Although there is research on the phenomenon, the connection between the attributes and the perceptions of the stakeholders is not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). This case study is descriptive and intrinsic. The purpose of a descriptive case study is to describe the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The purpose of an intrinsic case study is to understand a case of interest. This case is of interest to the researcher, and

subsequently, the researcher is a key instrument of the study. Hence the researcher interviewed the participants using a semistructured format that will promote discussion. In addition, the unit of study was conducted in a natural setting and will include rich and full descriptions (Yin, 2018). This study was purposeful in the selection of participants as to the information they could provide was relevant to the research gathered in the literature review. Furthermore, reflectivity was addressed as the researcher was aware of how personal experience could influence the research. Finally, case study design presents a holistic picture of the phenomenon in that it is inclusive and overarching (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In addition, Yin (2018) suggests that a researcher keeps in mind theses five components when embarking on case study design in order to show alignment and fidelity of the results:

(a) The research questions;

(b) Propositions in the study;

(c) The case;

(d) The logic linking the data to the propositions; and

(e) The criteria for interpreting the findings. (Yin, 2018)

First, the research question sets the tone to understand the phenomenon. The questions are established from the literature review and further focus on the questions related to the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). This researcher argues that the second component of propositions includes both conceptual framework and attributes. A proposition is what the scope of the study is exploring. For example, once you determine the propositions, the researcher is able to focus the study in the right direction. Thus, further narrowing down the scope of the study and tells the researcher where to find evidence to answer the research questions. In order to determine the propositions for this study, it was important to address the conceptual framework, which further

established the attributes of the study. A conceptual framework is a lens in which a study explores identifying what data to collect. Attributes are the characteristics of the study that further narrow down the scope of the researcher and guide the resource questions. Creswell (2013), describes propositions as a hypothesis and the elements that influence the phenomenon. Therefore, both conceptual framework and attributes fall under the component of propositions.

The third component of case study design is the case. Creswell (2013) describes the case as the unit of analysis, which can be a context, a setting, individuals, or groups. The case in this study was participants from small groups within an organization. In case study research, small groups are considered more concrete, whereas decisions, communities, and relationships are less concrete (Yin, 2018). The rationale for selecting single-case study design is valid when the case is critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal. This single-case study used a holistic unit of analysis and was a common case. The objective of this case was to understand and explore educational practices that can occur in an everyday situation (Yin, 2018).

The fourth component linking the data to the propositions refers to binding the case to the attributes within the conceptual framework established by the literature review. Binding the case narrows the focus of the case and distinguishes the context from the phenomenon. In this study the case was bound by definition and context. The definition of this case is the social-emotional development for individuals with SLDs and OHIs. The context is the LRE in which the instructional intervention practices occur. The propositions explain the information the researcher is looking at and cannot be addressed in isolation (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the data gathered from this study was taken directly from the propositions. That is to say, that the conceptual framework and attributes guided the researcher in collecting the data, which was obtained through semistructured interviews from the participants.

Finally, component five refers to the criteria for interpreting the strength of the case study's findings. Yin explains that to strengthen the case, rival explanations must be identified. This further narrows down the scope of the study (2018). Therefore, the criteria gathered through this study was interpreted and explained which explored the gap in the research between practice and research. Thus, some rival explanations are that special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists are provided with adequate planning time; teams work effectively and collaboratively to make decisions for students with disabilities, and the three participants have similar perspectives on what influences selecting social skills instructional intervention practices across a variety of LREs.

Research Population and Sampling Method

For this study, purposeful sampling was used (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis included perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists. These participants are key stakeholders who were selected for this research based on their participation in instructing and determining eligibility for students with high-incidence disabilities. However, participants may not be those that work with all the same students. Furthermore, these participants are members of the IEP team at the time of eligibility determination. The participants for this study were selected from local school districts. Recruitment emails were sent to special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists from the local school districts. When the researcher was not able to recruit participants through the initial recruitment process then the researcher used snowball sampling techniques where initial subjects were asked to recruit other participants that they may know with the same or similar job duties. The researcher recruited three school psychologists, three general education teachers, and four special education teachers, for a total of 10 participants.

Once participants agreed to participate, consent forms were provided via email. Following

receipt of informed consent, participants were given a brief demographic questionnaire. The

demographic questionnaire identified participants' relationships with students with an SLD or

OHI disability category label, students with social-emotional IEP goals, and have had at least 1

year of previous experience in their current job. Demographic information also included age of

participants, years of experience, and current professional development opportunities.

Participants were not required to work as a team or be from the same school. Next, 1–hour

semistructured interviews were scheduled and conducted with the 10 participants in a quiet

location to avoid distraction. Generally, 5–15 participants are recommended for case study

research (Yin, 2018). For this case study 10 participants were selected to ensure saturation where

reoccurring themes emerge.

Instrumentation

Demographic questionnaires and interviews are used in case study research (Creswell,

2013; Yin, 2018). For this study, semistructured interviews were conducted with three different

stakeholders: special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists

from 12 different schools. Interview questions were developed through the literature review and

were guided by the conceptual framework (see Appendix C). Participants were recruited through

email. Once participants agreed to participate a follow-up consent form was provided via email.

Then participants were emailed a Qualtrics questionnaire which included demographic

information, general questions about professional development and currently used instructional

practices (see Appendix B). Snowball sampling was used to recruit more participants. Next, a

semistructured interview was scheduled and conducted to gather descriptive information on the

perception of a school culture of collaboration, teacher experience, and knowledge as it relates to

social skills instructional practices and LRE. These interviews were conducted by the researcher over one session for 60 minutes per participant. The interview questions were determined by the researcher to answer the question of how school culture, experience, and knowledge influence practice. The interview questions included open-ended questions, which allowed for a rich and full response from the participants. Interview responses were documented via voice recording and then transcribed.

A review of documents was also conducted prior to the semistructured interviews. The documents collected included school mission statements, school demographic information, which included student population, number of teachers, experience of staff, and special education population, and low-income population. By gathering documents, the researcher utilized multiple sources of data to triangulate the data. Research questions included open-ended questions that required the participants to describe a perspective on the themes of collaboration and instructional practices. Follow up questions were asked to extend and clarify responses. These questions were determined from the research and aligned with the conceptual framework. The aim of these questions was to gather data that can describe the connection between social skills instructional practices and the influences of a school culture of collaboration, teacher experience, and knowledge.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures for case study design involve information collected through multiple sources (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). For this study, the multiple sources were obtained from the key stakeholders. The participants were key stakeholders that are responsible for instructing and evaluating students with high-incidence disabilities. Documentation for this study included emails, questionnaires, interviews, audio recordings, transcribed interviews, journal,

school documents, and notes. This documentation was gathered by the researcher through the questionnaire and semistructured interviews with the participants. Prior to obtaining demographic information, participants completed a consent form. Demographic information was obtained by the questionnaire. One-hour semistructured interviews were conducted in a quiet location. Audio recordings were made of the interviews and then transcribed by the researcher. Transcribed interviews were given to participants to verify accuracy through the process called member checking. Member checking and peer review was used to lend credibility and validity to the data gathered. Participants were de-identified in the transcription using pseudonyms. Documents were collected prior to the semistructured interviews; these documents included calendars, state reporting data, and school demographic data.

Data was collected until saturation was achieved (Yin, 2018). Saturation is when the responses from participants become the same. In the event that the number of participants did not constitute saturation, additional participants were recruited, and interviews were continued. These additional interviews were also transcribed and verified via member checking. These measures contributed to the credibility of the data gathered from the study.

Identification of Attributes

The attributes of this study include a school culture of collaboration, teacher experience, and knowledge. School culture is the identity of the school, the methods used for instruction, the school philosophy, and ideals. School culture is further defined by collaboration, which includes trust, sharing, environment, communication, and community, which establishes a school culture of collaboration (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Sakiz, 2017; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). Experience is referred to as the number of years in a position, the education program, degree, professional development, and knowledge that comes with experience. Experience is

further determined by participation in professional development (PD) opportunities and access to training. In addition to experience, teacher disposition is a relevant factor and is related to experience. For example, special education teachers are typically trained in specific strategies for instruction in small groups, whereas general education teacher receives training in whole group instruction and receive broader skills instruction. Special education instruction focuses on instructing students with special needs who may not respond to typical interventions. Furthermore, preservice teachers tend to receive instruction in inclusive instructional practices such as collaboration, coteaching, and push-in supports with a focus on inclusion in the general education setting (Ajuwon et al., 2014). Knowledge is an attribute that includes experience, as knowledge are skills acquired through experience. Knowledge can also be obtained through professional development, trainings, and practices (Burke & Sutherland, 2004).

Data Analysis Procedures

Pattern matching is an analytical process of reviewing the data and identifying patterns by placing the data into categories (Yin, 2014). Pattern matching was used to link the data to the propositions, which then began to build on explaining the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Data convergence is used to understand further the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). First open coding was conducted on the transcribed data. Open coding is the process of reviewing the data several times, looking for patterns, and chunking the data into categories. Then this coded data was reviewed again and further categorized. This step is called axial coding. Axial coding is the process of finding relationships between the chucks of data gathered during the open coding step (Yin, 2018). The final step in coding is selective coding. Selective coding is the process of selecting core themes identified in the axial stage and use the findings to explain the context in

which the phenomenon is occurring (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). All steps in the coding process were conducted by hand.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

The limitations of this case study included sample size, researcher bias, time, and lack of training on the part of the researcher. First, this case study was limited by the number of participants in that there are 10 total participants. The location of the participants was from 12 different schools from four school districts in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, which further limited this study. Sampling was based on volunteer participation and was limited to those that are willing to participate. The researcher tried to mitigate the limitations by using a variety of triangulation techniques. For example, using three different perspectives from each of the 10 different professional stakeholders. Also, documents were analyzed to provide additional insight into the school culture. Rich and thick descriptions were used when analyzing the information gathered from the participants to address the small number of participants.

Second, this case study was selected as it was of high interest to the researcher. The researcher is a special education teacher and is familiar with instructional practices. The researcher's past experience in special education contributed to the interpretation of the data gathered in this study. This was mitigated by the use of audio recordings of interviews that were transcribed then given to the participants for member checking. Additionally, the researcher engaged a peer to act as the code auditor to authenticate that codes were derived from the data and that data interpretation was congruent to the data collected. Next, data collection and analysis are a time-consuming process. In order to stay mindful and present in the data collection process, the researcher used a journal to document steps in the process. Furthermore, as the

researcher has no previous experience in collecting data needed for this case study, the researcher recruited a peer to review the data analysis and interpretation of results.

Delimitations are characteristics that have further narrowed the scope of the study. Delimitation factors are those factors that can be controlled. For this study the geographic location and the selection of participants were delimitating factors. This study took place in four Pacific Northwest school districts. The participants in this study were the adult staff that had experience working with students with disabilities. While there are other stakeholders involved in IEP teams, such as the parents, administrators, and other specialists, this study explored only those perspectives of selected participants as the research indicated a gap in perceptions of teachers and psychologists. Additional delimitations included the conceptual frameworks, attributes, and research questions.

Validation

Credibility was determined through triangulation. The dependability of the data is based on the use of triangulation, which included rich and thick descriptions of the interview responses. Once interviews were transcribed, participants were provided an opportunity to read the transcripts and provide any information as to accuracy, thus increasing validity and trustworthiness through member checking. These measures contributed to the credibility of the information gathered from the study. In addition, an audit trail was maintained using hand-written notes, a journal of interviews, and voice recordings. These measures contributed to the credibility of the information gathered from this study.

Furthermore, the researcher determined that parts of the results of the study were transferable in that the findings can be used in other contexts. For example, highlighting how the perspectives of school psychologists differed from general education teachers and special

education teachers in academic instruction. An audit trail allowed this study to be repeated by other researchers lending dependability to this study. Through the audit trail, this research could be repeated. Notes were maintained on how codes were determined and how themes were identified. In addition, every effort was made to ensure that the findings of this study were determined by the participants' responses, and were not relate to researcher bias.

Expected Findings

The researcher expected to find that the three different professionals have different perceptions of how the school culture, experience, and knowledge influence social-emotional skills instructional intervention practices. This information will fill the gap between social-emotional instructional practices and perspectives of the three key stakeholders. In addition, this study looked at instructional intervention practices used in special education to support the LRE for students with disabilities. Furthermore, this study sought to understand the challenges that special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists face when offering a continuum of services and settings for social-emotional instructional practices for students with SLD and OHI disabilities. In addition, the benefits of collaboration when implementing social-emotional interventions within the LRE for students with disabilities are discussed.

Ethical Issues

The researcher is currently a special education teacher in a local Pacific Northwest school district who works with students with SLD and OHI disabilities. Also, the researcher has experience instructing students with disabilities in social-emotional development in the resource room setting. Therefore, the subject matter was of high interest to the researcher. The researcher

has also worked in several schools in the area and within different school cultures and has experience collaborating with general education teachers and school psychologists.

There were no conflicts of interest in this study. The researcher was not in a supervisory role of any of the participants, nor did any participant receive payment of money or gifts. Participants were volunteers. The researcher had not worked at the schools or with the participants of this study and was not familiar with the participants outside of this research study. Prior to beginning this study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent was obtained from Concordia University regarding the policies for working with human research subjects and maintained compliance. Also, the researcher maintained an audit trail using handwritten notes, voice recordings, and maintained a journal to reduce subjectivity and maintain the credibility of information gathered from the participants.

Chapter 3 Summary

This descriptive case study explored the perspectives of three different key stakeholders on how school culture, teacher experience, and knowledge influence social-emotional instructional practices for students with SLD and OHI within the LRE. These stakeholders are special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists. These professionals shared their perceptions through questionnaires and interviews. Then, pattern matching was used to determine a pattern between participants' responses. The intent of the study was to explore the gap in the research in regards to the perspectives of these stakeholders in the field, working with students with disabilities and the implementation of instructional practices in the LRE. Specifically, the perspectives of stakeholders who have experience working with students under the disability categories of SLD and OHI who have specific social-emotional IEP goals. Furthermore, this study explored how school culture, teacher experience, and

knowledge influence instructional intervention practices. The data gathered from the research

addressed the differencing of perspectives in the field. This research further added to the current

body of knowledge on perspectives and social-emotional instructional practices within the LRE

for students with disabilities. Thus, sparking further conversations on social-emotional

instructional practices and how practitioners are making decisions on LRE for students with

disabilities.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Social-emotional learning is an aspect of education that is necessary to address the holistic needs of our children. IDEA and ESSA promote access and development of skills in both academic learning and social-emotional development (CASEL, 2018; IDEA, 2004). This case study sought to gain insight on the perspectives of general education teachers, special education teachers, and school psychologists on how culture, experience, and knowledge influences SEL for students with disabilities. Furthermore, this study addressed challenges in social-emotional instructional practices, and the benefits of collaboration. This case study utilized three data collection methods, the data was collected through documents, questionnaires, and interviews. Document collection consisted of obtaining school demographic information, and student handbooks. The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and included participant demographics and instructional practices information (see Appendix B). In-depth semistructured interviews were conducted with general education teachers, special education teachers, and school psychologists from school districts in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. These interviews allowed for rich content to answer the questions of how school culture, experience, and knowledge influences social-emotional instructional practices for students.

Once the data was gathered from the questionnaires, documents, and interviews coding began. The purpose of coding is to find patterns in the data to answer the research questions (Yin, 2014). The coding process consisted of three steps and included open coding, axial coding and finally selective coding (Saldaña, 2013; Yin, 2018). The final step of selective coding allowed the researcher to determine three themes that came out of the data. This data was reviewed code by code by a code auditor to reduce researcher bias. These codes were discussed

with code auditor and changes were made to those codes that did not show alignment from the participant data.

The researcher was mindful of the bias that inherent in qualitative studies because the researcher is part of the instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, it is important to state that the researcher has seven years of teaching experience as a special education teacher. This research case study was of high interest to the researcher due to the relationship with working with students on social-emotional skills and addressing those deficits. In addition, while the researcher was a first-time researcher bias was mitigated using member-checking pilot interviews, methodological triangulation, and code auditor who reviewed the data and results.

Pilot Interviews

Prior to the official dissemination of questionnaires and the interview process, a pilot process was conducted with known professionals in the field and were not included as part of the data. Participants in the pilot were three colleagues who were familiar with special and education services. These individuals were selected for their knowledge related to the topic. The pilot questionnaire was administered to three pilot participants to test the content of the questionnaire and for readability. Furthermore, three semistructured interviews were also conducted to determine if the questions evoked insight and if they were presented in the right order. It was also helpful for the researcher to practice interviewing skills. One of the participants noted spelling errors and made suggestions to the online questionnaire sequence. All three participant made suggestions to the wording of semistructured interview questions. Overall, the participants were receptive to the questions and provided information on duration of the semistructured interviews, sequence of questions, and ease of use of the online questionnaire administered through Qualtrics.

Description of the Sample

Recruitment began by reaching out to a local school district to contact potential participants prior to the questionnaire request. The questionnaire along with initial consent was sent via Qualtrics to 139 potential participants (see Appendix B). From theses emails two were bounced back and did not receive the message. Two participants completed the initial questionnaire. Since this was not enough participants to proceed, additional participants were recruited through professional connections and 27 more email addresses were obtained. From the snowball sampling, the researcher received responses for the questionnaire from 22 participants.

From the 22 questionnaire participants four were rejected for job titles not matching the three key stakeholders in this study. Eighteen responses were recorded for data collection and analysis. Of the 18 participants, three were school psychologists, nine were general education teachers, and six were special education teachers. Next, documentation was obtained from all 18 participants which included school calendars, mission statements, and school demographic information. Participants were then contacted to schedule interviews. Six participants did not respond to attempts to proceed with the interview while, two participants did not continue with the interview process due to time constraints. Hence, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted for this study. These interviews took place before or after school in a classroom or via Zoom, an online meeting platform. Interviews were 45-60 minutes in length which allowed rich descriptions. From the 10 interviews that were conducted there were three school psychologists, three general education teachers, and four special education teachers. Interviews were initially transcribed using speech-to-text software, then edited to make corrections. Completed transcriptions were sent to participants for member checking. No errors were reported. Next pseudonyms were assigned to both participants and the schools. Participants were not made

aware of their pseudonyms. Recordings and documents with identifying information were deleted.

Profiles of Participants and Schools

The participants in this study were selected because of their job titles and their recent involvement with students under the disability categories of SLD and OHI with social-emotional deficits. The participants included nine females and one male. The homogeneity of this sample in terms of gender may be a limitation. All 10 participants had a master's degree. In addition, all participants had five or more years in professional experience working in schools. The school psychologists were three females who worked in five different schools within one school district. The psychologists worked across grade levels with students from kindergarten through transition, ages 18–21. The general education teachers consisted of one male and two females from three different schools and were from different school districts. These general education teachers worked across grade levels with students from grade 6 through 12. The special education teachers consisted of four females from four different schools within three school districts. These special education teachers worked across grade levels with students from preschool through transition, ages 18–21. The 10 pseudonyms used were Sapphire, Garnet, Pearl, Amethyst, Topaz, Jasper, Onyx, Zircon, Ruby, and Agate as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant and School Data

Participants	Job Title	School	Grade Levels
Sapphire	School Psychologist	Obsidian Middle School	Grades 6–8
		Peridot School	K–12, Ages 18–21
Garnet	School Psychologist	Quartz High School	Grades 9–12
Pearl	School Psychologist	Emerald Elementary School	Grades K–5
		Opal Elementary School	Grades K–5
Amethyst	General Ed. Teacher	Aquamarine Middle School	Grades 6–8
Topaz	General Ed. Teacher	Turquoise Middle School	Grades 6–8
Jasper	General Ed. Teacher	Malachite High School	Grades 9–12
Onyx	Special Ed. Teacher	Jade Elementary School	Grades 3–5
Zircon	Special Ed. Teacher	Beryl Middle School	Grades 6–8
Ruby	Special Ed. Teacher	Amber Elementary School	Pre-K–K
Agate	Special Ed. Teacher	Spinel High School	K–12, Ages 18–21

Note. Pseudonyms were used for participants and schools.

Sapphire. Sapphire is a school psychologist with a master's degree which she received prior to 2010. She has more than 5 years' experience working in schools. She is between the ages of 36–50. Sapphire works at Obsidian Middle School and Peridot School across grade levels, with students from kindergarten through transition, ages 18–21 (see Table 2).

Garnet. Garnet is a school psychologist with a master's degree which she received prior to 2010. She has more than 5 years' experience working in schools. She is between the ages of 51–59. Garnet works at Quartz High School across grade levels, with students from Grades 9 through 12 (see Table 2).

Pearl. Pearl is a school psychologist with a master's degree which she received prior to 2010. She has more than 5 years' experience working in schools. She is between the ages of 36–

50. Pearl works at Emerald Elementary School and Opal Elementary School across grade levels, with students from kindergarten to Grade 5 (see Table 2).

Table 2

School Psychologists' Demographics

Participants	Degree	Years of Experience	Age Range
Sapphire	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50
Garnet	Master's	> 5 Years	51–59
Pearl	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50

Note. Pseudonyms were used.

From the three school psychologists five schools were represented. These schools are Quartz High School, Peridot School, Obsidian Middle School, Emerald Elementary School and Opal Elementary School. These five schools represent grades kindergarten to transition, age 18–21. Individual school data includes grade level, approximate student population, number of teachers, percentage of special education population and socioeconomic percentage of the student population which is represented in Table 3.

Obsidian Middle School. Obsidian Middle School represents Grade 6 through Grade 8. The school has a student population of fewer than 1100 and fewer than 70 full-time teachers. Eleven percent of students receive special education services, which is within the average range. Thirty-two percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. The school psychologist working at this high school was Sapphire (see Table 3).

Peridot School. Peridot School is a special education school representing kindergarten through transition, ages 18–21. The school has a student population of fewer than 100 students with fewer than 20 full-time teachers. This school is identified as a special education school thus 100% of the students receive special education services. Sixty-seven percent of the student

population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, making it a Title I school. The school psychologist working at this school was Sapphire (see Table 3).

Quartz High School. Quartz High School is a school representing Grade 9 through Grade 12, and transition, ages 18–21. The school has a student population of fewer than 1800 and with fewer than 100 full-time teachers. Fifteen percent of the student population receive special education services which falls higher than the average 12% seen in schools in this area. Sixty percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, making it a Title I school. Garnet is the school psychologist working at this high school (see Table 3).

Emerald Elementary School. Emerald Elementary School represents kindergarten through Grade 5. The school has a student population of fewer than 700 and with fewer than 50 full-time teachers. Eleven percent of students receive special education services which is in the average range. Fifty-seven percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, making it a Title I school. Pearl is the school psychologist working at this high school (see Table 3).

Opal Elementary School. Opal Elementary School represents kindergarten through Grade 5. The school has a student population of fewer than 700 and with fewer than 50 full-time teachers. Eleven percent of students receive special education service which is in the average range. Thirty-two percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Pearl is the school psychologist working at this high school (see Table 3).

Table 3

School Psychologists' School Demographics

	Obsidian Middle School	Peridot School	Quartz High School	Emerald Elementary School	Opal Elementary School
School Psychologist	Sapphire	Sapphire	Garnet	Pearl	Pearl
Student Population	< 1100	< 100	< 1800	< 700	< 700
Number of Teachers	< 70	< 20	< 100	< 50	< 50
Special Education Percentage	15%	100%	11%	11%	11%
Low Income Percentage	60%	67%	32%	57%	32%

Note. Pseudonyms and approximations were used.

Amethyst. Amethyst is a general education teacher with a master's degree which she received prior to 2010. She has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. She is between the ages of 51 to 59. Amethyst works at Aquamarine Middle School across grade levels, with students across Grades 6 through Grade 8 (see Table 4).

Topaz. Topaz is a general education teacher with a master's degree which she received in 2015. She has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. She is between the ages of 36 to 50. Topaz works at Turquoise Middle School across grade levels, with students from Grades 6 through Grade 8 (see Table 4).

Jasper. Jasper is a general education teacher with two master's degrees. The second degree was received prior to 2010. Jasper was the only male participant in this study. He has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. He is between the ages of 51 to 59. Jasper works at Malachite High School across grade levels, with students from Grade 9 through Grade 12 (see Table 4).

Table 4

General Education Teachers' Demographics

Participants	Degree	Years of Experience	Age Range
Amethyst	Master's	> 5 Years	51–59
Topaz	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50
Jasper	2nd Master's	> 5 Years	51–59

Note. Pseudonyms were used.

The three general education teachers represented three schools. These schools are Aquamarine Middle School, Turquoise Middle School, and Malachite High School. These three schools represent Grades 6 through Grade 12. Individual school data includes grade level, approximate student population, number of teachers, percentage of special education population and socioeconomic percentage of the student population which is represented in Table 5.

Aquamarine Middle School. Aquamarine Middle School is a school representing Grade 6 through Grade 8. The school has a student population of fewer than 800 with fewer than 40 full-time teachers. Fourteen percent of the students receive special education services, this falls above the average 12% seen at schools in this area. Twenty-four percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Amethyst is the general education teacher working at this middle school (see Table 5).

Turquoise Middle School. Turquoise Middle School is a school representing Grade 6 through Grade 8. The school has a student population of fewer than 200 students and with fewer than 20 full-time teachers. Eight percent of the students receive special education services, which falls below the average 12% seen at schools in this area. Thirty-five percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Topaz is the general education teacher working at this middle school (see Table 5).

Malachite High School. Malachite High School represents Grade 9 through Grade 12. The school has a student population of fewer than 300 and with fewer than 20 full-time teachers. Nineteen percent of students receive special education services, which falls above the average 12% seen at schools in this area. More than 95% of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, making this a Title I school. Jasper is the general education teacher working at this high school (see Table 5).

Table 5

General Education Teachers' School Demographics

	Aquamarine Middle School	Turquoise Middle School	Malachite High School
General Education Teacher	Amethyst	Topaz	Jasper
Student Population	< 800	< 200	< 300
Number of Teachers	< 50	< 20	< 20
Special Education Percentage	14%	8%	19%
Low Income Percentage	24%	35%	> 95%

Note. Pseudonyms and approximations were used.

Onyx. Onyx is a special education teacher with a master's degree which she received in 2018. She has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. She is between the ages of 36 to 50. Onyx works at Jade Elementary School across grade levels, with students from Grade 3 through Grade 5 (see Table 6).

Zircon. Zircon is a Special Education Teacher with a master's degree which she received in 2011. She has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. She is between the ages of 36 to 50. Zircon works at Beryl Middle School across grade levels, with students from Grade 6 through Grade 8 (see Table 6).

Ruby. Ruby is a Special Education Teacher with a master's degree which she received in 2012. She has more than 5 years' experience as a teacher. She is between the ages of 36 to 50.

Ruby works at Amber Elementary School across grade levels, with students from preschool through kindergarten (see Table 6).

Agate. Agate is a Special Education Teacher with a master's degree which she received in 2011. She has more than 5 years' experience as a. She is between the ages of 36 to 50. Agate works at Spinel High School across grade levels, with students from Grade 9 to Grade 12, and transition, ages 18–21 (see Table 6).

Table 6

Special Education Teachers' Demographics

Participants	Degree	Years of Experience	Age Range
Onyx	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50
Zircon	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50
Ruby	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50
Agate	Master's	> 5 Years	36–50

Note. Pseudonyms were used.

Four special education teachers represent four schools. These schools are Jade Elementary School, Beryl Middle School, Amber Elementary School, and Spinel High School. These four schools represent students across levels from preschool to transition, ages 18–21. Individual school data includes grade level, approximate student population, number of teachers, percentage of special education population and socioeconomic percentage of the student population which is represented in Table 7.

Jade Elementary School. Jade Elementary School represents preschool through Grade 5. The school has a student population of fewer than 600 with fewer than 50 full-time teachers. Sixteen percent of students receive special education services, which is above the average 12% seen in schools in this area. Sixteen percent of the student population are low income receiving

free or reduced lunch. Onyx is the special education teacher working at this elementary school (see Table 7).

Beryl Middle School. Beryl Middle School represents Grades 6 through Grade 8. The school has a student population of fewer than 1000 and with fewer than 50 full-time teachers. Thirteen percent of students receive special education services, which falls near the average range. Sixty-one percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, this is a Title I school. Zircon is the special education teacher working at this middle school (see Table 7).

Amber Elementary School. Amber Elementary School represents kindergarten through Grade 5. The school has a student population of fewer than 400 and with fewer than 40 full-time teachers. Twenty-one percent of students receive special education services. This is above the average 12% seen in most schools in this area. Fifty-four percent of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, this is a Title I school. Ruby is the special education teacher working at this elementary school (see Table 7).

Spinel High School. Spinel High School is a school representing Grade 9 to transition, ages 18–21. The school has a student population of fewer than 100 and with fewer than 10 teachers. Twenty-four percent of the students receive special education services. This is above the average 12% seen in most schools in this area. Greater than 95% of the student population are low income receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, this is a Title I school. Agate is the special education teacher working at this high school (see Table 7).

Table 7

Special Education Teachers' School Demographics

	Jade Elementary School	Beryl Middle School	Amber Elementary School	Spinel High School
Special Education Teacher	Onyx	Zircon	Ruby	Agate
Student Population	< 600	< 1000	< 400	< 100
Number of Teachers	< 50	< 50	< 40	< 10
Special Education Percentage	16%	13%	21%	24%
Low Income Percentage	16%	61%	54%	$> 95\%$

Note. Pseudonyms and approximations were used.

Research Methodology and Analysis

  Case Study. The researcher examined all the research designs prior to selecting case study. Phenomenological research was not selected because the researcher was not only looking at the shared lived experiences of the three stakeholders (Creswell, 2013). Narrative study was also not selected because the researcher was not looking at a single lived experience of the participants but rather looking for in-depth understanding as to how instructional practices are determined. Furthermore, action research was also not appropriate because there was no desire to improve any process or curriculum. According to Creswell (2013), case study is used to explore contemporary, real-life situations. Furthermore, a descriptive case study design provides an in-depth holistic understanding of the views of the stakeholders through multiply sources. Therefore, case study research design was selected and determined to be the best fit due to the desire to understand the perceptions of the three key stakeholders.

  When embarking on a case study research design Yin (2018) suggests that the researcher keeps in mind five components. These components are (a) the research questions, (b) propositions in the study, the case, the logic linking the data to the proposition; and (c) the

criteria for interpreting the findings. The research questions set the tone of this study to understand further the phenomenon of how school culture, knowledge, and experience influence instruction practices.

Main Question. What are the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the implementation of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Subquestion 1. How does school culture influence perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists as it relates to social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Subquestion 2. How does experience and knowledge of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists influence perceptions of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

Propositions helped to narrow down the scope of the research and provided evidence on how to answer the research questions. These propositions were the lens in which the data was collected and interpreted (Yin, 2018). The propositions in a study include the conceptual frameworks and attributes. This study included two conceptual frameworks. The first conceptual framework addressed a school culture of collaboration (Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). The second conceptual framework addressed four inclusive practices conducted within the LRE for students with disabilities. These practices are described within the Inclusive Methods of Education (IMOE) (Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ford, 2013). IMOE consists of the four following practices: (a) consultation; (b) coteaching; (c) push-in supports; and (d) pull-out services. The attributes of this study included a school culture of collaboration, teacher experience, and teacher knowledge. School culture is further defined by collaboration, which

includes trust, sharing, environment, communication, and community (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Sakiz, 2017; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

The case refers to how the researcher binds the case. Binding the case further narrows down the scope of the study. Yin (2018) recommends that case study be bound by either time and place, time and activity, or definition and context. For this study, the case was bound by definition and context. The logic linking the data to the propositions refers to having the propositions in mind when collecting and analyzing the data. Through the data collection process, data was gathered through documents, questionnaires, and semistructured interviews.

The coding process began with developing a matrix of the questionnaire and document data, and three readings of the interview transcripts. Open coding consisted of determining individual codes from each of the 10 interviews. The data was hand-coded line by line. The first attempt of open coding produced 136 codes from the general education teachers, 87 codes from the school psychologists, and 149 codes from the special education teachers. From these codes axial coding began with placing the codes into six categories of (a) individual needs of students, (b) culture of the school, (c) levels of knowledge and experience, (d) perceptions of others, (e) collaboration, and (f) SEL.

From these six categories, the codes were compared, and three themes emerged. These themes included (a) student-driven instructional practices; (b) influences of knowledge and experiences; and (c) dynamics of school culture. After validating the codes with the code auditor, the codes were further refined, which identified 137 codes from the general education teachers, 89 codes from the school psychologists, and 153 codes from the special education teachers for a total of 379 codes. However, the three themes remained the same.

Summary of the Findings

Through the coding process, three themes emerged. These themes were: (a) student-driven instructional practices, (b) influences of knowledge and experiences, and (c) dynamics of school culture. From the three themes, it was of interest to note that the school psychologists' and the special education teachers' data was evenly divided among the three themes while the general education teachers expressed more information that was within the student-driven instructional practices theme. In addition, special education teachers shared more varied responses that primarily focused on meeting and addressing individual needs within a school culture that is not always supportive. However, it was noted that some special education teachers expressed that their school has changed over the years in a positive way, with most suggesting a continued need for progressive change. Furthermore, within each theme, the topic of collaboration was discussed.

Summary of Theme 1: Student-driven instructional practices. The theme of student-driven instructional practices was established from 29 codes from the school psychologists, 56 codes from general education teachers, and 52 codes from special education teachers. Student-driven instructional practices was a theme that arose from the data in that the codes referred to the why participants made decisions for students with disabilities. Specifically, the data referred to participants' motivations and dispositions in working with students with special needs. Several of the codes referred to the individual needs for students in special education that addressed understanding the individual and seeking strategies to promote student growth. Participants' referred to the data from observations, assessments, and working with students as what motivated them to make decisions. Furthermore, each participant explained how the students' abilities, family situations, and individual situations motivated participants to seek additional

trainings, to seek collaboration opportunities with parents, and to see students in special

education excel and grow ultimately. The majority of participants indicated that pull-out

services, push-in supports, and consultation with professionals were practices used to instruct

students with social-emotional deficits. In addition, participants addressed the need to identify

individual students' needs as a priority when determining SEL instructional practices. This

included differentiating instruction, seeking opportunities for learning, and promoting student

growth. The importance of this theme was noted in answering the main research question of what

the perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school

psychologists are on the implementation of social skills instructional intervention practices

within the least restrictive environment.

     Summary of Theme 2: Influences of knowledge and experience. The second theme of

the influence of knowledge and experience on determining instructional practices was

established from 30 codes from the school psychologists, 34 codes from general education

teachers, and 51 codes from special education teachers. Detailed responses from the participants

lent insight into research subquestion 2 of how does experience and knowledge of special

education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists influence perceptions of

social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment. Most

participants expressed a need for more knowledge, which was often self-pursued when working

with students with disabilities. In addition, participants described an ever-changing teaching

environment that required this additional knowledge. As far as social-emotional development in

students, the three key stakeholders expressed different perceptions of the key social-emotional

skills needed for students to be successful. For example, school psychologists noted that

emotional regulation was a key social-emotional concept, whereas general education teachers

and special education teachers described self-management and self-regulation as the key social-emotional concepts. Emotional regulation is the ability to read social cues and adjust accordingly (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). While self-regulation is an overarching concept that addresses both emotions and behaviors (Ness & Sohlberg, 2013).

      Summary of Theme 3: Dynamics of school culture. The dynamics of school culture was a theme that arose from the data provided by participants. This theme was established from 30 codes from the school psychologists, 47 codes from general education teachers, and 50 codes from special education teachers. There was a mixed response from all 10 participants in how supported or collaborative they felt in their school settings, indicating that some were willing to express concerns with administration, while others were hesitant and did not seek out support or felt unencouraged. Overall, this mix of responses contributed to the theme of cultural elements in how schools determined which practices to implement. Further answering research subquestion 1 of how does school culture influence perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists as it relates to social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment.

      In addition, many participants described a different key social-emotional concept from the ones they felt were of most importance. Thus, indicating a less individual focus and more of a broad focus for students on a school level. With many participants indicating peer-relationships and problem-solving as key social-emotional concepts that the school addressed. Therefore, suggesting that the school culture was expecting more from students in a broader scale then those that worked directly with students with specific social-emotional deficits.

      Within each of the three themes, the over-arching idea of collaboration was noted. This is to say that collaboration was not viewed as an independent theme. While collaboration did not

develop as an independent theme, it was seen as a complementary aspect. The key themes of student-driven instructional practices, influences of experience and knowledge, and the dynamics of school culture were influenced by levels of collaboration. The key themes were dependent on individual student needs, participants' level of experience and knowledge, and the school culture with underlying elements of collaboration across each theme.

Presentation of Data and Results

Theme 1: Student-driven instructional practices. The majority of codes from the participants indicated the need to address individual student needs regardless of which instructional practices were available. All three groups of participants acknowledged that instructional practices were primarily guided by student's needs. This is to say that participants selection of instructional practices of pull-out supports, push-in services, consultation, or coteaching were secondary and the selection of instructional practices were based on the most beneficial strategy for the students. While all participants indicated the need to keep students in the forefront, special education teachers expressed that sometimes decisions for instructional practices were decided without the best interest of the student. They indicated that not all practices were available for the grades or in all the schools thus having inequitable services across the district. Thus, special education teachers highlighted that they had to often make decisions based on available instructional practices rather than the most beneficial instructional practices. As a result of a clear instructional pathway strategy, special education teachers reported that they had to develop complex combinations of strategies to meet student needs. For example, a combination of accommodations, and curriculums based on data. This was supported by, Onyx who said:

Special education generally focuses on reading and math, so this (new) curriculum is

differentiated enough to include students. Finding differentiated methods that go beyond

IEP goals is important. This is how you raise the bar, to align instruction and extending

learning beyond the IEP goals, by breaking down in a way they can access and use.

The school psychologists expressed that student successes were noted based on individual

students and special attention paid to their needs. Sapphire noted that "we're always talking

about giving every kid what they need, no matter what." While Pearl referred to individual needs

and her thoughts on inclusion, "I think inclusion really is dependent on what the child really

needs."

The general education teachers discussed instructional practices were facilitated in a way

that sought out individual student development and implied that each student was different.

Jasper described how he reached students at their level. He said, "I need to meet them (students)

where they are, and we've got to go together because trying to pull them up is not going to work

as well as helping them build their own ladder." He goes on further to describe how he addresses

individual needs and resets daily. Thus, allowing students to be successful. Jasper described a

conversation he had with a student that demonstrates that building relationships is important.

"You know, you are not what you did. I don't know what made you get here, I don't know why

(you did it), but you're not what you did." This idea of individual needs was noted by general

education teacher, Amethyst, as well when she described a situation with a student in her class

where she modified the grading process to allow her student to demonstrate his knowledge

without penalizing him for not doing homework. She sought to reach this student at his level.

He never did a lick of homework and got A minuses on all his tests. There's your grade.

You know the math. A lot of times in math, it doesn't have to be modified. Sometimes

just where they sit in the room. I'll modify but getting them upfront, getting them to do just at least the bare minimum participation in group activities, that kind of thing.

In addition to student-driven instructional practices which were determined by individual students, the participants discussed the benefit of collaboration with parents when understanding students' needs. This collaboration with parents was separate from the collaboration with professionals and at the school level, because the data gathered was directly related to the student's needs. Acknowledging the family as part of the student allows stakeholders to determine which practices are best suited for the student. Topaz, a general education teacher, described parent collaboration as essential in terms of determining practices for students. She said: "I have a tendency to meet with parents to help and support them advocate for their students because parents are the most powerful piece. They can say this is what my child needs." Onyx, a special education teacher, stated that she "collaborates with parents all the time." While Sapphire shared this same sentiment by saying, "I collaborate with them to gather information for about their student."

Theme 2: Influences of knowledge and experience. The influences of knowledge and experience theme included comments from participants that included seeking professional development opportunities to become knowledgeable in the field, establishing expectations developed from knowing students, how perceptions of students with social-emotional deficits have changed, and how others' perceptions made addressing students' needs difficult. In addition, many participants indicated that experience influenced their instructional practices and often shared personal experiences with newer teachers whom they felt respected their knowledge. For example, Zircon, a special education teacher, said that "teachers will come and ask for advice." While Agate expressed the same sentiment in her comment, "I have two newer

teachers that come to me, and when I give them information, they really appreciate it." This is supported in the literature where McLeskey and Waldron (2011) indicated that experienced teachers have more strategies and knowledge.

This study recruited participants with a minimum of 1-year experience because the researcher needed to understand how experienced teacher were influenced without the struggles of navigating and understanding the education system with limited experience (Ajuwon et al., 2014; Gavish, 2017b). Consequently, all of the 10 participants had five or more years of experience working in the school setting. This allowed the researcher to ask questions pertaining to changes in levels of knowledge and experience as factors in determining instructional practices for students with disabilities. Interestingly, most participants described how they actively and continually seek professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge base. The school psychologist, Garnet, stated that her school has professional development, department meetings, and district trainings which she feels "keeps me fresh, kept up-to-date, and in the loop of what is going on. I feel this is very important for me. Professional development makes me better." While Ruby, a special education teacher, expressed that she takes advantage as many professional development opportunities as she can to use those new skills in her teaching. However, Topaz, a general education teacher, said, "I love it when it's valuable. Sometimes it is wasting my time." Indicating that not all professional development has the same quality.

Specific attention to how knowledge and experience influences instructional practices was noted in how expectations should be established for students with social-emotional deficits. Special education teacher, Agate, describes how she addresses individual students' needs through expectations, which she has developed over time.

I really looked at what are we accomplishing, what are we getting in there? And now I'm really more concerned about. . . I don't care if the kid gets the work done if they know how to learn, and if they are, I've gotten them to a place where they're able to deal with the situations and deal with it, so maybe they didn't understand and get all the way through the book, but if they know now how to break down the assignment, and be able to do it and feel successful and be able to take those skills forward, that it's so much more important.

Furthermore, when asked to describe success when working with students with social-emotional deficits, Onyx, a special education teacher, shared an example of a student how showed growth based on setting "clear expectations" and providing "direct instruction on strategies." Similarly, the school psychologists expressed that student successes were based on knowledge and experience. Pearl described the importance of patience and resilience when working with students that describes how individuality is a priority in teaching.

Some kids can change things in their situations, and others can't. It's the patience and trying to figure out which one you're working with, and then the patience to let them be who they are or do what they're going to have to do.

Most of the participants expressed that their level of experience influences the daily decisions they make and how they view their practice. This is noted in how they describe changes in teaching philosophy and how their perceptions of students with social-emotional deficits have changed over time. Sapphire described how her teaching philosophy had changed some over the years in regards to addressing how to "produce productive citizens" through the grading process because some student expectations look different. Furthermore, when asked how her teaching philosophy changed special education teacher, Onyx said that she now understands

that "students will always rise to the bar we set for them. We should raise the bar really high. Challenge them every day." While, special education teacher, Agate, described how experience and knowledge have contributed to her teaching style. "I think a lot of it is just a maturation and no longer being that scared person who just got their first job and thinks my gosh, but if I don't keep in my job." Further adding how she makes decisions on which instructional practices are used for students. "Decisions are based on history and often experience for me."

In addition, school psychologists expressed how perceptions of others can make addressing SEL in an inclusive model difficult for students in special education. Pearl stated, "It's a hard program to implement a system-wide because it is really only effective with certain kinds of students, and the staff has to be the right combination."
Sapphire supported this idea and said, "People had some really bad experiences and developed some very negative attitudes." She goes on further to state, "Attitudes around social-emotional disabilities is a challenge; people really like to think about what students have control over and don't take control over." Thus, suggesting that a colleague's lack of knowledge and understanding can contribute to what is done to address social-emotional deficits. That is to say that what decisions stakeholders make are influenced by what other people think special education is and how students with social-emotional deficits learn. Special education teacher, Zircon, described a challenge some students face is with the adults not understanding students with social-emotional deficits because of lack of knowledge. Specifically, they do not understand that it's "a kid without a skill."

Theme 3: Dynamics of school culture. The theme of the dynamics of school culture on determining instructional practices was determined through participants' comments related to how the administration responded to and worked with staff or students, which practices were

available within the school, and the time available to collaborate or meet students' needs. For example, the majority of participants felt that the administration contributed to the culture of the school and were supported and appreciative of their staff's efforts and commitment. When asked how supported they felt, eight of 10 participants, which included all four of the general education teachers, indicated that the administration was receptive to new ideas, administration was supportive, and staff feels valued. The two participants that did not feel supported were Zircon and Amethyst. Specifically, special education teacher, Zircon stated:

The school culture has really changed this year. There has been a much more collaborative focus on students and sharing students this year. Every student is every teacher's student. And every teacher is an intervention teacher. The staff is really buying into it. It is amazing. I see staff interacting with all kids now, not just their team of kids and staff is getting along better.

While general education teacher, Amethyst, described the collaboration with administration and teachers that occurs at her school.

I feel like I've got tons of support from the administrators. There's a lot of give and take, people bring stuff to the table, people bring ideas, people share, and they take ideas from others, and I feel like we work together pretty well in a group.

Furthermore, one special education teacher and one school psychologist expressed a lack of support and appreciation. Ruby, the special education teacher, specifically stated there was "a lack of collaboration" and further went on to add "there is a lack of support from the administration staff."

When asked how valued she felt, school psychologist, Pearl responded with "Maybe one minute of the school week, every week. I don't feel respected for my knowledge; I don't feel valued for it. It's not an easy position to be in."

In addition to administrative support and collaborative efforts, the dynamics of school culture included which instructional practices were available at each school. For example, while coteaching, pull-out services, push-in supports, and consultation are instructional practices when administering, not all schools use all four practices. From the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the use of these four practices in their current school settings. The highest-ranked instructional practice was push-in, with six out of 12 schools ranked as the most used practice. The second most popular instructional practice was also push-in with five out of 12 schools ranked in the number two position. The instructional practices of consultation and coteaching likely indicated a school with a high level of collaboration and trust (Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). However, collaboration was ranked as the number one practice by only one out of 12 schools. Interestingly, while the research indicated that coteaching is a popular method of instruction, participants indicated that coteaching was not used in five out of 12 schools.

Table 8

Instructional Practices Ranking

School	Push-In	Pull-Out	Consultation	Coteaching
Beryl Middle	1	2	3	X
Aquamarine Middle	1	2	4	3
Peridot School	1	3	4	2
Obsidian Middle	1	3	4	2
Emerald Elementary	1	3	2	4
Opal Elementary	1	3	2	X
Malachite High	2	1	3	X
Jade Elementary	2	1	3	X
Quartz High	2	4	3	1
Turquoise Middle	2	4	3	1
Spinel High	2	3	1	X
Amber Elementary	3	2	4	1

Note. Pseudonyms were used.

Throughout the interview, participants commented on how time was a factor in determining and implementing instructional practices and strategies for students, even though no questions specifically asked how time was a factor. When asked about collaboration with staff, participants indicated collaboration was useful to determine practices for students, yet time became an issue. For instance, a special education teacher, Ruby, indicated there was little time to have everyone meet at once.

> Meetings need to be planned way in advance to ensure everyone can attend. Nobody wants to stay after contracted hours to discuss. So, it is difficult to collaborate with the team. Not as much time for students in this school.

Furthermore, Topaz, a general education teacher, said there was very little collaboration time, because of the small campus size. While the school psychologist, Pearl, expressed that some

meetings had little benefit, which was not a good use of time. Also, indicating that time

constraints did not allow for coteaching in her school setting.

     Collaboration. The element of collaboration was expressed in each of the three key

themes. Collaboration was an aspect within the themes; however, it was not viewed as an

independent theme. The reason for this was because collaboration contributed to a way in which

stakeholders were able to drive individual student instructional practices, gain and share

knowledge and experience, and create a school culture of collaboration. The aspect of

collaboration was viewed as beneficial when participants were given enough time to collaborate

with others. Within the theme of student-driven instructional practices, participants discussed

how parent collaboration was necessary and beneficial to understanding a student's needs. While

collaboration with colleagues was necessary to gain knowledge about special education and

social-emotional topics. This was evident from a comment by special education teacher Zircon,

who said: "professional development is collaboration." Finally, collaboration within the school

culture was viewed as both frequent and limited. For example, while the school psychologist,

Garnet, who has only one school, stated her school was "highly collaborative." School

psychologist, Pearl, who works within two different schools, expressed that one of her schools

"is very top-down." Further describing district level "job alike" meetings as a waste of time.

Therefore, the frequency and level of collaboration within the three themes offered increased

insight, knowledge, and guidance.

Chapter 4 Summary

     This case study explored the perceptions of school psychologists, special education

teachers, and general education teachers by using questionnaires, documents, and in-depth

interviews with eight participants from 12 different schools. Through the coding process, which

included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, three distinct themes emerged. These themes were: (a) student-driven instructional practices; (b) influences of knowledge and experiences; and (c) dynamics of school culture. This study sought to understand and identify how key stakeholders determined which instructional practices were selected. The contributing factors included individual student needs, participants' knowledge, participants' experience, and the school culture in which they work.

Three key themes were derived from the data as the contributing factors in how key stakeholders determine which instructional practices to implement. In addition, the benefits of collaboration were discussed. The first theme of student-driven instructional practices arose from the data in that the codes referred to how instructional practices are delivered for students with disabilities through addressing the individual needs of students. Furthermore, the data further addressed the perceptions of the three key stakeholders in how individual student needs drive instruction, practices, and strategies. Thus, providing insight into how instructional practices are determined for students with social-emotional deficits. The second theme to evolve from the data was the influences of knowledge and experience. This was noted in comments from participants that described how their personal experience and knowledge contributed to their social-emotional skills instructional intervention practices. The third and final theme that emerged from the data was the dynamics of school culture. Overall, there was a mix of responses from all 10 participants in how supportive or collaborative they felt, which contributed to the theme of school culture in how schools determined which practices to implement. However, while this study addressed four key instructional practices of coteaching, push-in supports, pull-out supports, and consultation, not all schools were able to offer all four of theses. In addition, some

participants expressed concerns with a lack of time, which contributed to implementing all practices.

Finally, collaboration was discussed as beneficial. Participants described collaboration as beneficial in determining individual students' needs when collaborating with parents. This collaboration allows teachers and psychologists to understand the student further and determine which practices would be best suited. Also, while learning new ideas or sharing learning with other participants described how collaboration was necessary. Furthermore, participants described how collaboration as a school culture allowed a sense of belonging, a way of guiding which instructional practices were offered, and a way of determining which instructional practice most benefited the student with the available resources.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Holistic education addresses the needs of a student on an academic level and a social level, thus developing a well-rounded individual. However, there is a lack of SEL practices that address the needs of students with disabilities (Kirby, 2017; Korinek & Defur, 2016; Robinson, 2017; Zuckerbrod, 2018). Specifically, those students with high-incidence disabilities such as SLD or OHI, whose social-emotional deficits are not adequately addressed within the education system (Gresham et al., 2001; Hamilton-Jones & Moore, 2013; Strogilos, & Stefanidis, 2015). Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus on which instructional practices and strategies are the most beneficial. While some researchers promote full inclusionary practices as necessary, others promote small-group instruction or alternative methods (Kirby, 2017; Gresham, 2016). Generally, schools are required to utilize a variety of instructional methods along a continuum of placements in the LRE (Ford, 2013; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). This study sought to address which factors influenced key stakeholders' decisions when determining which instructional practices to implement for their students.

Special education is a continuum of services that includes the instructional practices of coteaching, consultation, pull-out services, and push-in supports implemented within the LRE. (Ford, 2013; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015; Gresham, et al., 2001; Tremblay, 2013; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). This study sought to understand and identify how key stakeholders determined which instructional practices were selected and what factors contributed to these decisions. Furthermore, adding insight as to how school culture, experience, and knowledge play a part in which instructional practices are utilized. Therefore, this case study design answered the questions regarding the perceptions of school psychologists, special education teachers, and

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general education teachers, and what influences how instructional practices are determined further explaining the benefits of collaboration, school culture, experience, and knowledge.

Hence, case study designed was selected for this study as it seeks to answer the questions of how and why a phenomenon occurs. In this case study, the researcher asked the questions of how school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers determine social-emotional instructional practices within the LRE. Furthermore, this case study looked at the propositions, which included a school culture of collaboration, coteaching, push-in supports, pull-out services, and consultation and how these influenced the determination of instructional practices. From the detailed, in-depth semistructured interviews, documents, and questionnaires, three distinct themes arose. These themes included: (a) student-driven instructional practices, (b) influences of knowledge and experience, and (c) dynamics of school culture.

Summary of the Results

This case study focused on describing how instructional intervention practices are determined for students with social-emotional deficits within the LRE. The study surveyed school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers on how instructional intervention practices were determined and what factors influenced these decisions. The questionnaire was followed up by document collection with school demographic information and in-depth semistructured interviews. Participants consisted of 10 key stakeholders; three school psychologists, three general education teachers, and four special education teachers and were selected because of their role in evaluating and determining practices for students with disabilities. Data collection was conducted until data saturation.

Through this study, the propositions assisted in narrowing down the scope of the research and helped to answer how instructional practices were determined for students with social-

emotional deficits. The propositions in a study included two conceptual frameworks and three

attributes. The first conceptual framework addressed a school culture of collaboration

(Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015). The second conceptual framework addressed four inclusive

instructional practices conducted within the LRE for students with disabilities. These four

practices were: (a) consultation, (b) coteaching, (c) push-in supports, and (d) pull-out services.

The attributes from this study included: (a) a school culture, (b) teacher experience, and (c)

teacher knowledge. School culture is further defined by collaboration, in that school culture of

collaboration includes trust, sharing, environment, communication, and community (Cahill &

Mitra, 2008; Rosen, 2007; Sakiz, 2017; Tzivinikoua & Papoutsakib, 2015).

This case was bound by definition and context (Yin, 2018). The logic linking the data to

the propositions refers to having the propositions in mind when collecting and analyzing the

data. Through the data collection process, data was gathered through documents, questionnaires,

and semistructured interviews. The case study consisted of 10 participants from 12 Pacific

Northwest area schools. Participants were selected based on their experience in the field,

experience with students, and job title.

- Required to have 1-year experience in the current profession;
- The job title was a school psychologist, general education teacher, or special education teacher;
- Current experience working with students with social-emotional deficits;
- Recent experience working with students under the disability category of SLD or OHI.

Participants were recruited through emails and snowball sampling. When sufficient participants

had completed the questionnaire, school documents were gathered, followed by the scheduling of

in-depth interviews. From the original 22 participants that completed the questionnaire, 10 were interviewed for this study.

The 10 participants from this study were three school psychologists, three general education teachers, and four special education teachers as indicated in figure 1. The data was triangulated using documents, a questionnaire, and an in-depth interview with the participants. The participants represented 12 schools from four districts. These schools were Beryl Middle School, Aquamarine Middle School, Peridot School, Obsidian Middle School, Emerald Elementary School, Opal Elementary School, Opal Elementary School, Malachite High School, Jade Elementary School, Quartz High School, Turquoise Middle School, and Spinel High School. From these 12 schools, the school-wide population was fewer than 7700 students with a special education population of fewer than 1100, which is equivalent to approximately 14% of the student population receiving special education services.

The codes derived from this study were determined from the participants. The codes fell into three themes as indicated in Figure 1. The themes that emerged were:

- Student-driven instructional practices;

- Influences of knowledge and experience; and

- Dynamics of school culture.

School psychologists discussed 29 codes under the theme of student-driven instructional practices. Common codes included addressing students' needs to see success, identifying student needs, parent collaboration, push-in instructional practices, and inclusion dependent on student needs. Within the theme of knowledge and experience, 30 codes were seen. These codes included challenges of perceptions, inefficient coteaching models, emotional regulation for students, learning from experience, limited knowledge of newer staff, and seeking out

professional development opportunities. The final theme of school culture included 30 codes derived from the school psychologists' perspectives. The codes acknowledged school-wide SEL curriculum for students, lack of time, administration supportive, frequent collaboration, and mixed school focus on which key social-emotional skills are most important. Overall, the codes were evenly distributed over the three main themes.

General education teachers expressed more data within the theme of student-driven instructional practices. The data from the general education teachers identified 56 codes within the theme of student-driven instructional practices. Codes from this them addressed accommodating all students, use of direct instruction, focusing on student needs, embedded instruction in the general education setting, meeting needs of students, identifying individual student needs, and seeking ways to promote student growth. The theme of influences of knowledge and experience was determined from 34 codes. Some of the key codes included frequently attending professional development, pursuing professional development appropriate for self, and self-regulation and self-management are key social-emotional skills many students need. The third theme of dynamics of school culture was derived from 47 codes. These codes included changing mindset on a school level, level of support from administration, celebrating student successes, and a school-wide culture of addressing problem-solving for students with social-emotional deficits.

The codes from special education teachers were evenly divided across the three themes. There were 52 codes within the theme of student-driven instructional practices. Key themes included accommodations for students, coteaching and push-in has increased based on student needs, meeting students at their level, understanding the why students' needs are not being met, LRE is based on student needs, establishing expectations for student success, parent

collaboration, pull-out services are realistic, and students' needs are met when instruction is differentiated. The second theme of influence of knowledge and experience was developed from 51 codes. Many common codes were noted in this theme. These codes included self-regulation as a key skill necessary for students, seeking out professional development in SEL; support is given to newer teachers, and collaboration is an element of professional development. The third theme of dynamics of school culture included 50 codes. The common codes were a mix of perceptions of administrative support, a mixed perception of levels of collaboration, limited resources to determine practices, separation of special education and general education environments.
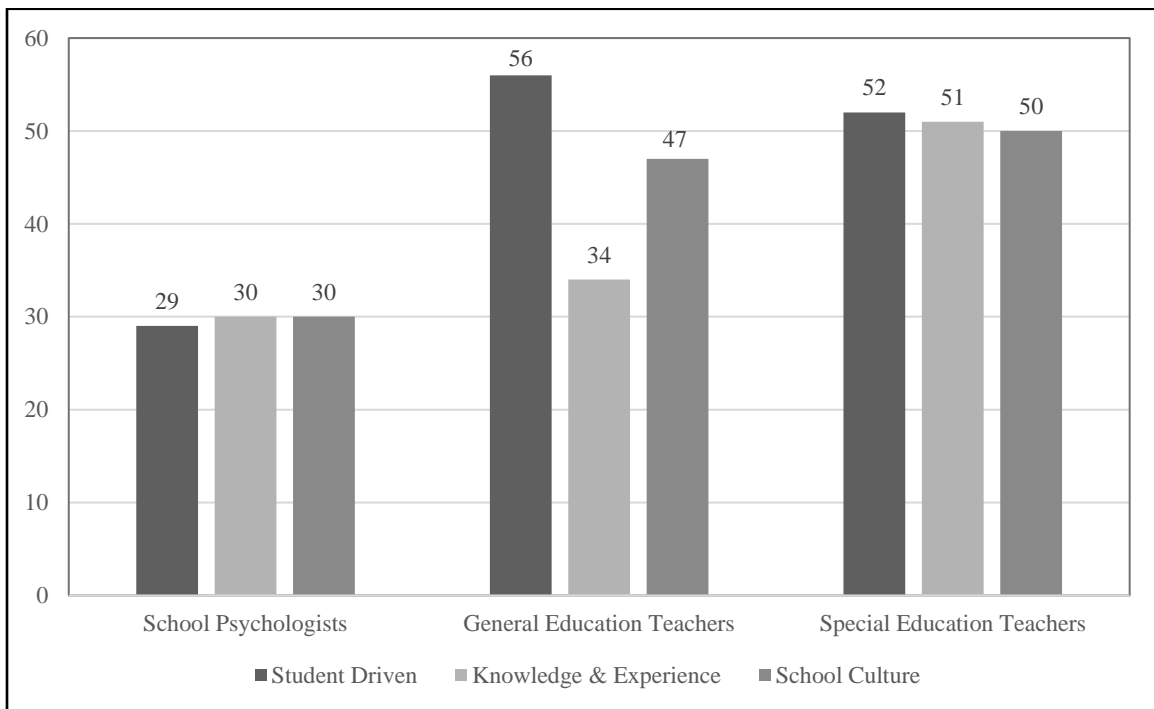
Figure 1. Codes derived from the three participant groups.

The codes were divided among the three themes as indicated in Figure 2. The theme with the most codes was student-driven instructional practices. With the majority of codes in this theme from the general education teachers. The second theme, which included codes related to the influences of knowledge and experience, has the least amount of codes. Special education

teachers described more influences of experience and knowledge, then the other two key stakeholder groups. The third theme of the dynamics of school culture was derived from codes with the majority of codes from the special education teachers at 50 codes, and followed by a close second of 47 codes from the general education teachers.
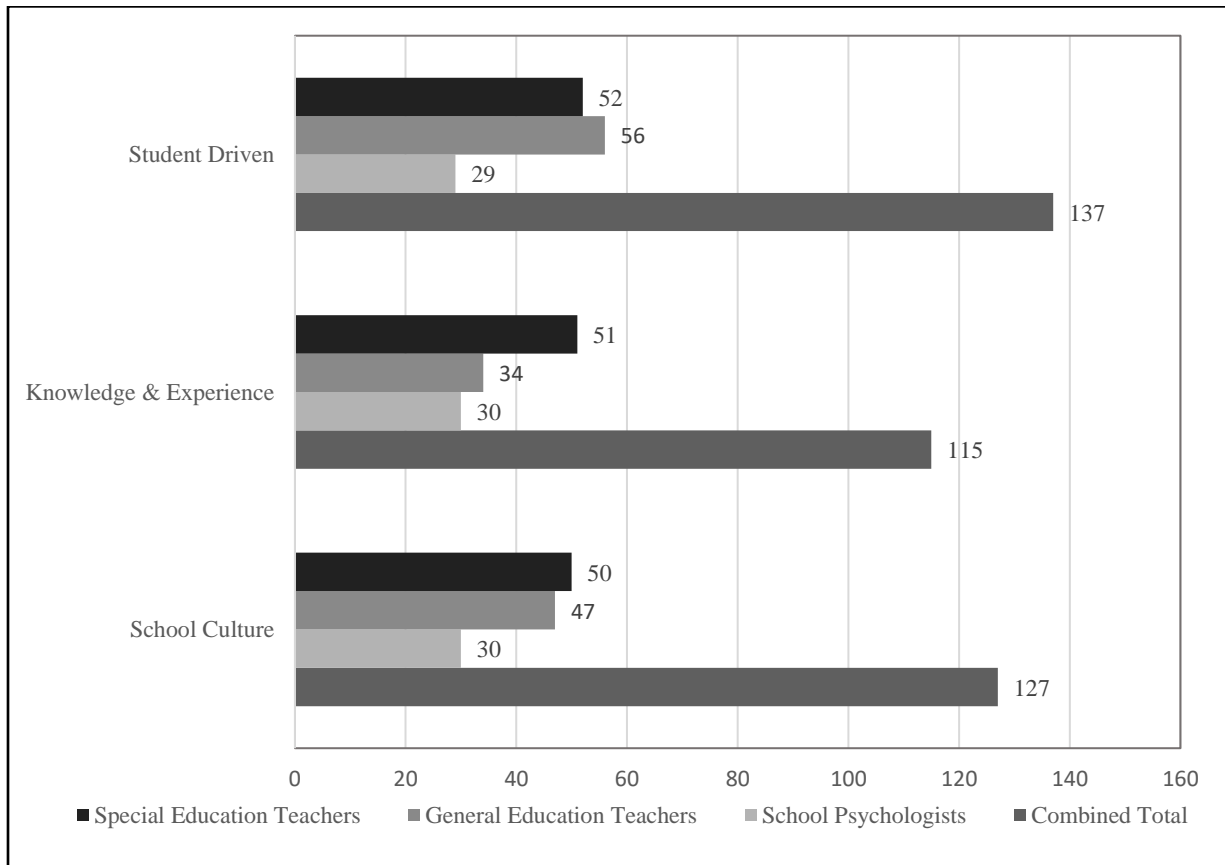
Figure 2. Total number of codes for each theme.

Discussion of the Results

In this case study, school psychologists, special education teachers, and general education teachers' perceptions of how school culture, knowledge and experience contributed to the implementation of social-emotional instructional intervention practices. The results showed that participants felt that individual student needs, experience, knowledge, school culture and collaboration contributed to the implementation of instructional practices. These results were

derived from questionnaires, documents, and in-depth semistructured interviews. Specifically, the three key themes that emerged from the data were: (a) student-driven instructional practices, (b) influences of knowledge and experiences, and (c) dynamics of school culture. In addition, collaboration was an underlining element that was noted across all three themes as highlighted in Figure 3.
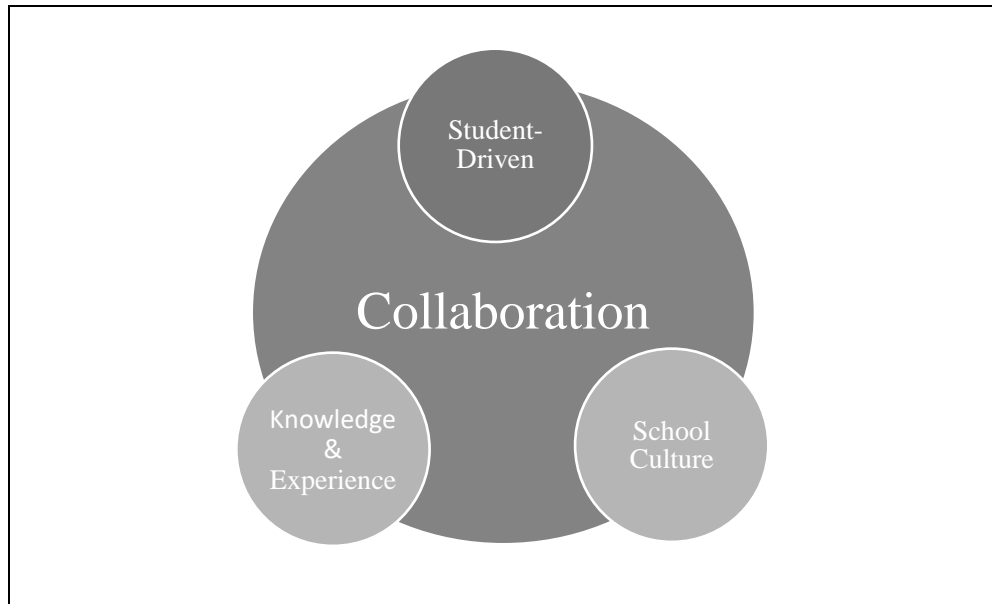
Figure 3. Relationships of the themes.

The theme of student-driven instructional practices was derived from the data answering the main research question regarding what factors contributed to the implementation of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment. From the data participants primarily focused on meeting individual student needs when instructing in SEL within the least restrictive environment. Special education is a field that addresses the individual needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, it was not surprising when participants indicated their desire to understand and find practices, methods, and strategies that addressed the individual needs of students. The first theme arose from the shared goal of setting high expectations and promoting student success. While at times challenges were acknowledged the

main message from the theme was to reach students at their level and build them up regardless of which settings or instructional practices were available. For example, the instructional practice of coteaching was very desired by both special education teachers and school psychologists; however, the instructional practice was not offered in all the schools. As a result, push-in supports were the most popular and used practice for instructing students with social-emotional deficits. Thus, the data is reflective of the researcher which suggests that coteaching is a viable practice for instructing students, resources often do not allow for all of the options of inclusion (Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015; Tremblay, 2013). Perhaps another way to think about these instructional practices is on a continuum where push-in may come before coteaching because coteaching requires teachers to be able to work together synchronously and that requires coordination and trust. Therefore, push-in supports could be used as a preliminary way of promoting collaboration with general teachers. Thus, supporting inclusionary practices and promoting student growth.

Furthermore, it was interesting to note that consultation was not utilized as frequently as the instructional practices of push-in supports or pull-out services, although, consultation was described as an effective practice of inclusion for instructing students with disabilities. Consultation was seen as an effective inclusionary practice because it does not require as much coordination as coteaching. Consultation can be viewed as a building block to collaboration; however, it was interesting to note it was not a popular approach. The participants indicated that this was because of the lack of available time rather than motivation for collaboration. For example, the general education teacher Topaz made a comment about having to stay late or working anywhere from 45 to 50 hours a week just to get the job done. Similarly, it was also noted by two general education teachers, Topaz and Amethyst, that special education teachers

were often doing their best in instructing students as there was not enough time to do the job. It was also interesting to note that teachers described that there were frequent meetings between psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers to discuss students; however, these meetings were focused on understanding student needs and exploring options for instruction. It was not to discuss specific instructional practices in regards to social-emotional development which was a necessary component to effective intervention. Thus, indicating that the knowledge base of the individual general education teachers, special education teachers and psychologists was not enough to address the needs of the students with social-emotional deficits.

The second theme of the influence of knowledge and experience on determining instructional practices was established from 115 codes. These codes referred to staying up-to-date on social-emotional development, attending useful professional development trainings, and changing on a professional level over time. Responses from participants detailed how knowledge and experience contributed to the instructional intervention practices for students with social skills deficits. With some participants stating that experience directly impacts their teaching and builds upon their knowledge base. This theme came from subquestion 2 which asked how experience and knowledge influenced practices. Questions included frequency of professional development, quality of professional development, and the factors that contributed to changes in education philosophy.

Overall, many participants from the three groups did not feel that opportunities for professional development within their schools were adequate. The data further indicated that while social-emotional skills instruction is necessary for students, this is viewed as a new concept within their school settings. The general education teachers described their limited experience of SEL within their content areas, acknowledging that the special education teachers

were more experienced in the area of instructing students with social-emotional deficits. However, they also understood how it was their responsibility to instruct students in the academic areas as well as the social-emotional areas. Thus, indicating that knowledge skill building was necessary for educators when working with students with disabilities. Furthermore, this lack of knowledge when working with students on social-emotional development prompted many participants to see out additional external learning opportunities that allowed them to work with students with disabilities more effectively.

The third theme, the dynamics of school culture, was derived from the participants data. This theme described how administrators influence, collaboration, opportunities for support, available inclusionary practices, and a sense of value contributed to a positive school culture. Interestingly, the special education teachers and school psychologists described that their schools were moving towards a more supportive and collaborative culture; however, there were still limited opportunities for inclusion. On the other hand, the general education teachers did not view this as a major problem. Further indicating that there is a gap between the special education professionals and the school psychologists in their perceptions of school culture compared to the general education teachers. Furthermore, the culture of the school often determined which instructional practices were available and how professionals decided how to implement instructional practices for their students. This study also found that collaboration was related to school culture. Specifically, when participants felt trusted and valued, they had a positive relationship with administration indicating that a culture of collaboration was beneficial in staff perceptions. The study clearly highlighted the common goal among participants. This goal was to see students be successful regardless of how collaborative or positive the school culture. In

addition, while not all participants sought to communicate with administration; however, all participants addressed the importance of communicating with parents to support student needs.

In regards to collaboration, each theme discussed how collaboration was necessary to make decisions, implement practices, and understand students. However, not all schools promoted an environment conducive for collaboration. Perhaps this is also why consultation was not used as frequently as push-in supports or pull-out services, because consultation requires coordination and collaboration of a general education teacher and a special education teacher in how to instruct a student. As indicated above, participants repeatedly discussed the importance of social-emotional development and more knowledge was needed in regards to delivering effective instruction. As a result, the more experienced teachers found ways to share ideas with their colleagues especially in those schools that did not promote frequent opportunities for collaboration or sharing. Specifically, the teachers reported sharing of ideas with newer teachers but less likely with experienced teachers who had limited knowledge of supporting students with social-emotional deficits. Thus, suggesting that collaboration occurs among some rank of teachers but does not occur across the profession.

Ancillary Results

As the researcher was completing this research study Covid–19 had much of the nation on lockdown. This pandemic has changed the way teachers are instructing students, with many districts using online classrooms and other methods to continue learning. Therefore, while this study addressed instructional practices in the classroom setting, the researcher wonders how instructional practices will look in the future with online teaching. Furthermore, this brings up the questions regarding instructing students beyond the classroom setting and the effects on social-emotional development and learning for our students. Perhaps, there will be an additional

model of instructional practices that needs to be developed to address SEL for students.

Therefore, additional resources may be required to address student needs. Consequently, more

students may be affected by the lack of social interactions, lack of structure, and lack of social

modeling. This suggests that additional research may be necessary to further understand the

effects of the lockdown, how to set high expectations for students who may have regressed, and

how to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and able to instruct students in social-emotional

development. Furthermore, it will be interesting to explore how school general education

teachers, special education teachers, and school psychologists were able to maintain their

collaboration efforts during this pandemic and in this new environment.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

This study looked at SEL for students under the disability category of SLD or OHI. This

study found that some participants referred to those with social-emotional deficits as those with

Autism or other more significant disabilities. However, the purpose of this study was to exam

how decisions were made for students under the SLD or OHI disability category. Two of the

general education teachers described situations of those with social-emotional deficits,

specifically as having Autism. These findings are consistent with the research. For example,

authors Fuchs and Fuchs (2015) claimed that students did not receive the same or as intensive

instructional attention as those with Autism. Furthermore, the research of Korinek and Defur

(2016) suggested that there was a limited effort in addressing social-emotional development for

students with high-incidence disabilities. Thus, this lack of acknowledging those with SLD or

OHI disabilities as having social-emotional deficits was evident. Furthermore, this section

examines the results from the study through the lens of the propositions and further relates to the

research. The propositions for this study are the conceptual frameworks and attributes. From the data three themes emerged:

- Students' individual needs drive the instructional intervention practices;

- Knowledge and experience of teachers and psychologists influence on instructional practices;

- The dynamics of school culture contribute to the implementation of instructional practices; and

- Collaboration is beneficial.

Student-driven instructional intervention practices. Researchers Ford (2013) and Stavroussi and Didaskalou suggested that there is a need to differentiate instruction rather than to push for inclusion or a standardization of instruction for students with disabilities. This differentiation of instructional practices was noted in the comments made by participants, further addressing the need for meeting individualized needs of the students. In addition, authors Freeman and Sugai (2013) implied that teachers required multiple methods of instruction for student with social-emotional deficits. This could include direct instruction, small groups, or specific skill development. Topaz referred to the use of direct instruction curriculum in her school used to address the needs of student. Garnet stated that social-skills instruction was embedded in the learning. While Agate stated that she was seeking out new methods for instructing students to meet their individual needs. Furthermore, Pearl indicated that she provided SDI for one student as this was the best option to ensure growth. The need to address students' individual needs was noted by participants in their attempts to reach students using multiple methods of instructional practices and strategies.

Ford (2013) suggests that social skills should be embedded in instructional, while Gresham (2016) suggests that resource rooms provide direct instruction, and generalization can happen later in the general education setting. All of which were used by the participants in this study. Similarly, one school used a program called What I Need (WIN), where students were separated by their skills to receive either enrichment or support services. However, this practice did not differentiate between low achievers and those with learning disabilities and was often viewed as a replacement for special education services or SDI. Thus, not acknowledging that those requiring special education services need additional supports and SDI in addition to this tier I intervention (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2015).

Understanding and acknowledging the individual needs of students with social-emotional deficits answers the main research questions of how school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers determine instructional practices. Participants used multiple methods, which included embedding instruction in the general education curriculum, the use of resource rooms, and push-in supports based on the student needs. Few schools used coteaching, and one teacher referred to the coteaching at her school as "not really coteaching." However, while this study determined that the needs of students' drive instructional practices, other factors do contribute to how these practices are determined.

Influences of knowledge and experience. This study found that knowledge and experience were contributing factors to the decision's stakeholders made when determining instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits. Specifically, several participants noted the importance of SEL and acknowledged the need to seek professional development in this area. Participants also described a sense of disconnect between what they saw as key social-emotional skills and the key social-emotional skills addressed on a school

level. It was evident that there was a need for more support and resources to reach all students. For example, general education teachers and special education teachers described self-regulation as a key social-emotional concept, which according to authors Shogren et al. (2014) is one of the key concepts necessary when addressing social-emotional development and instruction. However, it was also suggested that many teachers did not have the confidence or skills necessary for instruction in this area. Perhaps, this is why participants said that their schools did not address the same key skills.

Furthermore, the findings of this study were consistent with the research of Ajuwon et al. (2014) who suggests that older, more experienced teachers were less knowledgeable about current trends in education. However, the participants interviewed were aware of their deficits and sought to gain more knowledge and understanding in the area of special education and social-emotional development. In addition, Robinson (2017) suggests that the experience of professionals becomes a factor in instructional practices due to a variety of preservice training programs promoting inclusion. For this study, the participants had five or more years' experience in the field. Therefore, while preservice training may lead to ideas about inclusion, many of the participants indicated that their teaching philosophy had changed in relation to experience. Most specifically, participants gained knowledge from the successes and challenges of working with individual students with disabilities. Participants acknowledged a change in how they looked at inclusion; however, they suggested that this was based on the needs of the students, and no longer related to what they were taught.

While the findings of this study do not allow the researcher to describe the effectiveness of practices, strategies, or curriculums, it is interesting to note that the research suggested several social skills curriculums that address the needs of students. However, only one of these

curriculums, Second Steps, were mentioned by participants. The curriculums that were

mentioned included Zones of Regulation, Friendzy, and Second Steps. Also, participants felt

they had limited resources to meet the needs of students, which included limited curriculums or

options to address students' needs. This lack of resources and need for more was repeated and

mentioned through the research (Amr et al., 2016; Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Da Fonte &

Barton-Arwood, 2017; Gresham, 2016).

   Dynamics of school culture. The dynamics of school culture contributes to the

implementation of instructional practices for students. This theme answered the question of how

school culture influences how stakeholders determine instructional practices. The data in this

study is consistent with the research on the influences of school culture. For example, authors

Rosen (2007) and Cahill and Mitra (2008) suggest that school culture influences the practices

used in a school. This is determined by trust, environment, level of collaboration, and time.

Many of the participants indicated that they were trusted and collaborated with administration

and other professionals; however, the other participants suggested that there was a lack of trust

and collaboration based on limited time. Not all practices were available in every school.

Furthermore, some schools did not allow a common planning time or enough time which is

necessary to adequately address multiple inclusionary practices (Banks et al., 2015; Conderman

& Hedin, 2017).

   According to Gavish (2017b) a school culture will indicate what instructional practices

are used in schools. One of the participants, Pearl, indicated that she felt a lack of support or a

sense of value. This was one of the schools that did not offer coteaching. However, of the three

schools discussed by three out of four special education teachers coteaching was also not offered,

while some schools that indicated that coteaching was offered, the participants did not feel that

this practice was effective or adequate. Furthermore, participants indicated that there were

barriers to effective collaboration. This barrier was time, which again was mentioned by Gavish

in the effectiveness of social skills instructional practices (2017b).

The research further suggests that school cultures that promote professional development

and learning are better equipped to implement inclusionary practices, including coteaching and

consultation (Kang et al., 2015). Interestingly, participants sought professional development on

an independent level; however, many did not find the opportunities presented through their

school as effective or efficient. Indicating that more practices may have been offered in those

schools that did not utilize coteaching or those that ranked consultation as a less frequently used

option.

Benefits of collaboration. The benefits of collaboration were noted in this case study.

While this was not a theme within the study, it was an underlining notion that arose from the

data. Participants' frequency referred to how their collaboration with parents directly influenced

their understanding of a student and how this knowledge benefited the students. Furthermore,

schools that had frequent opportunities to collaborate had positive attitudes towards the school,

students, teachers, and administration. Thus, indicating that collaboration contributed to positive

attitudes.

Overall, stakeholders addressed the changes in education with an overall push for

inclusion, but most participants indicated that full inclusion was not what every child needed. In

addition, participants did indicate that while inclusion works for some, there are often not

adequate supports and resources. Also stating that it was necessary to have an inclusive culture

that has a mix of both general education students and special education students. Ultimately,

while experience influences the instructional practice's professional selected, it was not clear if this was related to what they learned in their preservice training program.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included sample size, geographic location, researcher bias, time, and lack of training on the part of the researcher. This case study was limited by the number of participants, featuring 10 total participants from four school districts in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. This study could be enhanced by addressing more professionals within a larger region and from a different geographical location. In addition to the small sample size, participants were only selected for their job titles of school psychologists, special education teachers, and general education teachers. Furthermore, the participants were not required to be working with the same students, or as a single unit, but rather have had current and recent experience working with students with social-emotional deficits. Perhaps by interviewing a team that did work as a unit, more insight on school culture and collaboration could have developed.

This study could be further enhanced by addressing speech-language pathologists and school administrators on their perceptions of school culture, experience, and knowledge on the implementation of instructional intervention practices for students with social-emotional deficits. In addition, the key stakeholders often referred to students with social-emotional deficits as those diagnosed with Autism or were from more self-contained classrooms such as a life-skills classroom, or a structured learning center. In general, the participants did not separate those with high-incident disabilities of SLD and OHI from those with more significant disabilities. Further research could include insight on how specific students receive their instruction in social-emotional development. Thereby looking at understanding how the individual students were

affected by the instructional practices available in the school setting. Finally, the researcher was bond by the conceptual framework and the literature that influenced the narrow scope of this study.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The implications of this case study's results suggest that additional practices, policies, and methods are needed in the implementation of instructional practices in SEL for students with disabilities. Further suggesting that intentional strategies are needed as a way of implementing appropriate instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits in a way to promote student growth. While this study found that the selection of instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits within the LRE were based on a variety of factors including individual student needs, experience, knowledge, school culture, and levels of collaboration this was not enough to address the growth of students or the effectiveness of the instructional practices. Thus, suggesting that it is necessary to continue to offer a variety of instructional practices, and continue to monitor student growth which includes setting high expectations and building relationships. Therefore, schools should continue to understand and acknowledge students' needs, offer a variety of instructional settings, and set high expectations to promote and develop socially competent students.

Participants repeatedly stated that they sought more knowledge through professional development on an independent level rather than through their school or district. Thus, indicating that a higher quality of professional development could contribute to the effectiveness of instructional practices used with students with disabilities. In addition to more frequent professional development opportunities, offering high quality professional development opportunities to all teachers would assist in developing knowledgeable staff. Moreover,

implementing a cross mentoring program which has teams of experienced general education teachers, special education teachers, and psychologists to enhance student growth would be an area for further exploration. For example, schools could implement school-based mentoring programs where experienced teams were matched with inexperienced teams, inexperienced teachers, or any combination of the above. This could not only increase and share knowledge; it could lead to collaborative efforts by staff which would build on developing a positive school culture. Thereby improving the quality of instructional practices used to education students within the school setting.

Furthermore, this study indicated the concept of collaboration was the common denominator across the three themes. Within each theme collaboration was discussed and described as necessary when working with students with disabilities. It was interesting to note that although collaboration occurred in many situations it was not always effective, frequent or second nature. By embedding collaboration through intentional design and opportunities to collaborate will help strengthen instructional practices such consultation and coteaching that require sharing of knowledge and coordination. Collaboration among the team members is likely to promote student growth, feelings of being valued, and more readily sharing insights with others in a way that would benefit everyone thus, developing a culture of collaboration. Subsequently, it would also be interesting to investigate and explore further how all teachers across the profession can be included in knowledge sharing rather than just the newer teachers as shown in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

This section explores further recommendations for research. The participants from this study repeatedly discussed the individual needs of students and how to promote student growth.

Thus, suggesting more research is needed in setting high expectations for students with disabilities in regards to social-emotional development as it relates to the instructional practices available within a school. Furthermore, while this study found that instructional practices were based on a variety of factors including individual student needs, experience, knowledge, school culture, and levels of collaboration this was not enough to address the growth of students or the effectiveness of the instructional practices. Thus, suggesting additional research is needed in the area of effectiveness of instructional practices.

Furthermore, since one limitation of this study was a small sample size of 10 participants within 12 schools additional research could be conducted to include different demographics. Demographics could include comparing or understanding the difference in rural school districts verse urban school districts or including additional stakeholders. For example, demographics could include addressing the parent and student perceptions or including administrators and speech-language pathologists who work with students with social-emotional deficits. For example, this study could be expanded to explore the perceptions of how additional stakeholders contribute to how school culture is established and how this influences instructional practices. Furthermore, as this study was homogeneous with only one male participant, it would be of interest to interview a population of participants of different genders.

Further recommendations could include addressing the perceptions of the school psychologist, general education teacher, and special education teacher as a single unit in determining instructional practices for a student or group of students with social-emotional deficits. Perhaps, this study could compare the instructional practices used in different schools for students with similar disabilities, further adding insight into how practices are determined. Also, additional research could seek to understand why schools do not offer all of the

instructional practices available across all grades. Research could look at how schools decide when to offer coteaching or why consultation is not promoted. In regards to experience and knowledge future research could be conducted on how effective mentoring programs are for new teachers, how mentoring influences school culture, or how mentoring contributes to instructional practices used within the school setting. In addition, further research could be conducted on improving professional development for school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers or addressing how to improve school culture. Moreover, the ancillary results indicate that additional researcher may be needed to understand how to implement intervention practices for social skills development with online learning and outside of the school setting. Subsequent research may also need to be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of any new instructional practices or the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on social-emotional development for all students.

Conclusion

Providing social-emotional support for all children are necessary in order to make education practices equitable. This case study research answered the questions of how do school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers determine instructional practices in the LRE for students with social-emotional deficits. This study found that generally, school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers shared similar insight to how instructional practices are determined. However, each group of stakeholders had a different level of perspective and insight on the importance of the three key themes. These key themes included student-driven instructional practices, influences of knowledge and experience, and dynamics of school culture. Moreover, the common thread of collaboration was observed throughout the three themes.

Largely, the participants shared a motivation to understand individual student needs when implementing instructional practices in SEL, given the resources that were available. In addition, knowledge and experience played a part in which instructional practices were available and how these instructional practices are implemented. For example, while this study examined the perspectives of knowledgeable psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers' further knowledge and understanding of SEL was necessary for all of the stakeholders. Specifically, addressing SEL as an important topic of education that requires up-to-date information and resources to address the needs of those students with social-emotional deficits within the least restrictive environment. In addition, the results indicated that there was a gap between the instructional practices of coteaching and consultation and the current practices of inclusive education. For example, while coteaching and consultation are noted as viable instructional practices the factors or knowledge, time, and levels of collaboration interfered with the uses of these practices. Furthermore, the inclusionary practices of push-in supports were determined to be the primary mode of instruction.

Subsequently, the level of knowledge of participants was varied on the subject of social-emotional development and learning, thus, making it necessary to implement effective and useful professional development opportunities for general education teachers to improve the level of instruction and to better meet the individual needs of students. Moreover, the dynamics of a school culture influenced the decisions that stakeholders were able to make when selecting instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits, in that not all school were able to offer all four of the instructional practices of coteaching, push-in supports, pull-out services, and collaboration. Finally, the overarching concept of collaboration was presented throughout the three themes. Furthermore, when school psychologist, general education teachers, and special

education teachers were seeking to identify individual student needs they collaborated with parents. Also, when participants sought additional professional development opportunities to build knowledge, or worked with administrator and stakeholders they were able to make decisions on which instructional practices to implement hence, collaboration was beneficial.

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Appendix A: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

> As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

> "Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

> "Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.*

Dusty Gail Low
_____
Digital Signature

Dusty Gail Low
_____
Name (Typed)

April 8, 2020
_____
Date

Appendix B: Online Questionnaire

Please note that this questionnaire will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

Click next for more information and to review consent.

The purpose of this study is to study perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists on the implementation of instructional practices for students with social-emotional needs. We expect approximately 12-15 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment in January 2020 and end our interactions with participants on March 2020.

To participate in this phase, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. Completing this phase should take less than a half-hour of your time.

You will be invited to share contact information if you wish to enter the next phase of this research project. This information will be destroyed immediately after the conclusion of this research. All other study data will be held securely and then destroyed after 3 years.

There are no risks to participating in this study other than the everyday risk of your being on your computer as you take this questionnaire. Information you provide will help us have a better understanding of how social-emotional instructional practices are determined for students with disabilities. You could benefit from this study by developing a deeper understanding and knowledge on social-emotional instructional practices within your school environment.

Your personal information will be protected. This questionnaire is firewall and password protected so that only the researcher (me) can see your answers. I will keep this in strict confidence. The information/topic of the questions are not sensitive or risky. However, if you were to write something that might allow someone to possibly deduce your identity, we would remove this information and we would not include this information in any publication or report. Any data you provide would be held privately. All data will be destroyed three years after the study ends.

You can stop answering the questions in this online questionnaire if you want to stop.
Please print a copy of this for your records. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Dusty Gail Low at email [redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

     I consent, begin the study
     I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

Q1.1 What school or schools do you work at?

Q1.2 What is your current job title?
    Special Education Teacher
    School Psychologist
    General Education Teacher
    Other

Q1.3 How long have you held your current job title?
    1-2 years
    2-5 years
    More than 5 years
    Less than 1 year

Q1.4 Do you currently (within the last year) work with students identified under the disability categories of Other Health Impairment (OHI) or Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?
    Yes
    No

Q1.5 Do these students have Social-Emotional or Behavior IEP Goals that address deficits in social- emotional needs?
    Yes
    No
    Unsure

Q1.6 What grade level do you work with? (Click all that apply)
    Preschool
    Kindergarten to 2nd Grade
    3rd Grade to 5th Grade
    6th Grade to 8th Grade
    High School 9th to 12th
    Transition Age 18–21

Q1.7 What is your age range?
    Under 25
    25–35
    36–50
    51–59
    60–65
    Over 65
    Decline to answer

Q1.8 How long have you worked in your current school setting?
 Less than 1 year
 1–2 years
 2–5 years
 More than 5 years

Q1.9 How long have you worked in your current profession?
 Less than 1 year
 1–2 years
 2–5 years
 More than 5 years

Q1.10 What is the highest degree you have earned?
 Bachelor's Degree
 Master's Degree
 2nd Master's Degree
 Doctorate

Q1.11 What is the year in which you received your last degree?
 2019
 2018
 2017
 2016
 2015
 2014
 2013
 2012
 2011
 2010
 Before 2010

Q1.12 What is the area of your last degree?

Q2.1 Generally, how often do you collaborate with other members of your team, related to students with social-emotional needs? N/A if not applicable

	Daily	2–3 times per week	Once a week	2–3 times per month	Once a month	Less than one a month	N/A
General Education Teachers?							
School Psychologists?							
Special Education Teachers?							
Parents?							
Administration?							

Q2.2 How often do you participate in professional development related to Social-Emotional Learning?
    Once a month
    2 to 6 times a year
    Once a year
    Less than once a year
    Never

Q2.3 How satisfied were you with the most recent professional development you have received in Social-Emotional Learning and Development?
    Very Satisfied
    Satisfied
    Fairly Satisfied
    Unsatisfied
    N/A

Q2.4 Who provided the most recent professional development in Social-Emotional Learning and Development?
    Provided by current school or district
    Provided by an Educational Service District or other nearby district
    Outside agency such as PESI
    WEA or Union
    Unsure
    N/A

Q2.5 How often do you participate in professional development related to Special Education?
    Once a month
    2 to 6 times a year
    Once a year
    Less than once a year
    Never

Q2.6 How satisfied were you with the most recent professional development you have received in Special Education?
    Very Satisfied
    Satisfied
    Fairly Satisfied
    Unsatisfied
    N/A

Q2.7 Who provided the most recent professional development in Special Education?
    Provided by current school or district
    Provided by an Educational Service District or other nearby district
    Outside agency such as PESI
    WEA or Union
    Unsure
    N/A

Q2.8 How often do you participate in professional development related to Behavior Supports and Interventions or Behavior Management?
    Once a month
    2 to 6 times a year
    Once a year
    Less than once a year
    Never

Q2.9 How satisfied were you with the most recent professional development you have received in Behavior Supports and Interventions or Behavior Management?
    Very Satisfied
    Satisfied
    Fairly Satisfied
    Unsatisfied
    N/A

Q2.10 Who provided the most recent professional development in Behavior Supports and Interventions or Behavior Management?

    Provided by current school or district
    Provided by an Educational Service District or other nearby district
    Outside agency such as PESI
    WEA or Union
    Unsure
    N/A

Q3.1 Which instructional practices are used at your school to instruct students with disabilities. (select as many as apply)

    Consultation with professionals
    Coteaching
    Push-in to Classroom
    Resource Room

Q3.2 Rate in order from most (1) used to least (4) used practice at your school to instruct students with disabilities (rank each practice even if not used)
_____ Resource Room
_____ Push-in to Classroom
_____ Coteaching
_____ Consultation with professionals

Q4.1 What is the best way to contact you?

    Phone
    Text
    Email

Q4.2 When is the best time to contact you?

    Weekday Mornings
    Weekday Afternoons
    Weekday Evenings
    Weekends

Q4.3 Contact Information

    Name _____
    Email Address _____
    Phone Number _____

Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Questions

Subquestion 1. How does school culture influence perceptions of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists as it relates to social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

- Describe your school culture.

- What are your thoughts on inclusion?

- Describe how your school does or does not support inclusion.

- How do you collaborate with teachers? Administration? Parents?

- How does collaboration benefit your teaching?

- What type of instructional practices are available within your school?

- Which instructional practices are most popular?

- How much do you support the instructional practices that are most popular?

- What resources do you use to instruct students with social-emotional deficits?

- How do students with social-emotional IEP goals receive instruction?

- How is LRE determined for students with social-emotional IEP goals?

- Who is involved in these decisions?

- How involved are you in deciding the instructional practices for students with social-emotional deficits?

- How do you decide which instructional practices are right for a student with social-emotional deficits?

- How often do you feel that your skills and knowledge are valued?

- How often are you encouraged to share new practices?

- How often are you encouraged to share successes and failures with colleagues?

- How often are you encouraged to debrief about daily events?

- How supported do you feel to share when things go wrong?

Subquestion 2. How does experience and knowledge of special education teachers, general education teachers, and school psychologists influence perceptions of social skills instructional intervention practices within the least restrictive environment?

- Describe your experience working with students with social-emotional deficits.

- What successes have you had?

- What challenges have you had?

- How have you changed?

- How have you stayed the same?

- How often do you engage in professional development for special education topics?

- How often do you engage in professional development for social-emotional learning?

- How has professional development influenced your teaching?

- How has your philosophy changed over your career?

- What factors do you contribute to changes in teaching philosophy?