

**Exploring District Wide Scaling and Implementation of Inclusive Practices for Learners
with Extensive Support Needs: An Instrumental Case Study**

Christina Nowak Constantouros

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Reading Committee:

Carly Roberts, Chair

Nancy Rosenberg

Sylvia Bagley

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

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Christina Nowak Constantouros

University of Washington

Abstract

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Christina Nowak Constantouros

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Carly Roberts

College of Education

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, there have been many public debates regarding inclusive education and the ways in which this equity initiative continues to be met with resistance (Connor & Ferri, 2007). Academic researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of inclusion and positive outcomes for all students, however students with disabilities continue to be physically segregated from their peers without disabilities (Agran et al., 2020). This is especially true for learners with extensive support needs (ESN) who continue to be segregated based on conditional approaches to inclusive education (Morningstar et al., 2014). This instrumental, qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) explored how one small rural school district is leveraging their district commitment to equity to engage in district wide inclusive education reform. Leveraging critical inclusion and a disability studies in education lens, the findings of the

study indicate strong evidence to support current literature indicating that: (1) practices that support students with ESN often support the whole school community, (2) structures that provide consistent opportunities for collaboration with interdisciplinary teams support educator agency, (3) collaboratively created statements and tools can create unity through clarity, (4) innovative leaders are necessary for transformative change, and (5) inclusionary schools in siloed systems can thrive and can lead toward district level scale and sustainability.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and all the families I have worked with.

Mikey, for helping me find my passion and purpose.

Students & families, for supporting my efforts and challenging my perspective.

Evan, for continuing to support me to be the best version of myself.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, there have been many public debates regarding inclusive education and ways this equity initiative continues to be met with resistance (Connor & Ferri, 2007). Academic researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of inclusion and positive outcomes for all students, however students with disabilities continue to be segregated physically from their peers without disabilities (Agran et al., 2020). Furthermore, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data over the years indicates a trend of the continued misinterpretation of the law whereby students with disabilities remain segregated (Connor & Ferri, 2007). The inclusive school's movement has been at the forefront of education reform as it seeks to create school communities that are about "belonging, nurturing, and educating all children and youth, regardless of their differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class, and ethnicity" (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007, p. 351). Recent scholarship seeks for a reconceptualization of inclusive education away from the deficit minded systems that continue to reinforce beliefs and assumptions regarding who belongs in general education (Agran et al., 2020; Morningstar et al., 2014). This is especially true for learners with extensive support needs (ESN) sometimes referred to as students with severe disabilities and/or students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Giangreco, 2020), who continue to be segregated based on conditional approaches to inclusive education (Morningstar et al., 2014).

This instrumental, qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) took place in a small rural school district that is currently engaging and collaborating around their recent district commitment to equity and inclusive education reform across all schools in their system. The selected school

district is the focus of the case study to help provide insight into how inclusionary practice leaders understand and implement inclusionary practices in their contexts, but also across the larger system of schools in the district. Participants in this study consisted of inclusionary practice leaders from multiple schools in the focal district. Inclusionary practices leaders are defined in this work as anyone engaging and upholding a commitment to inclusive education. The selected participants are a mix of district level administrators, building administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, classified staff, and family members. All the participants are committed to the inclusion of students with ESN. Data was generated through a variety of collection methods including individual and focus group interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The role of school leaders in schoolwide inclusive reform efforts is a crucial part of equity-based inclusive education work. A school leader's vision is the strongest predictor for teacher and staff attitudes towards inclusive education (Pedaste et al., 2021). While strong administrative leadership is a predictor for effective implementation of any initiative, leadership can come from any individual actively engaged in the participation of shaping inclusionary principles and practices, referred to as agency (Billett, 2006). In other words, school leaders are not always formal administrators, they can be department heads, committee leads, or individuals working in their contexts who have strong commitments to dismantling silos as evidenced by their advocacy work. Diverse leadership is especially important as it supports collaboration between all stakeholders to develop shared visions for inclusive practice implementation to be expanded across the larger system (Pedaste et al., 2021).

To understand how inclusive practice leaders describe and implement inclusionary practices as well as the visioning process around scaling and sustaining those practices district

wide, I used qualitative inquiry to explore the following research questions: (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN? (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? This study specifically focuses on learners with extensive support needs (ESN), sometimes referred to as students with low incidence disabilities, severe disabilities and/or students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Giangreco, 2020). This study intentionally focuses on students with ESN because these students are most likely to be removed from general education and the least likely to learn the general education curriculum despite a wide range of evidence indicating increased skill development (Taub et al., 2017).

Theoretical constructs and concepts from disability studies in education (DSE) (Baglieri et al., 2011) and critical inclusive education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007) guided this inquiry and subsequent design and analyses. These theories framed this inquiry to position those furthest from educational justice at the center to understand how to support and sustain greater systems change efforts. DSE and critical inclusion facilitated my ability to question the societal construct (Connor et al., 2009) of inclusive education regarding who and where education is received while seeking ways to reimagine education towards ways that see ability over disability, attend to considerations for differences, and prioritize how to shift practices that increase access to the curriculum (Baglieri et al., 2011). Finally, this chapter sets the stage for the impetus of the study by providing context regarding the history and evolution of inclusion and inclusive education, the impact ideology has had on the field of education, and the need for a transformative approach to bring change to schools and districts.

History of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is rooted in the 1960s civil rights movement, which set the stage for early disability rights advocates as segregation policies were questioned, disrupted, and resisted (Hodkinson, 2011). Disability rights advocates and leaders organized around goals that focused on empowerment and collective human, civil, and legal rights for disabled people (Scotch, 1989). The civil rights movement, more specifically the segregation policies disrupted during the civil rights movement, helped shape early definitions of inclusion through an ability rights lens (Connor & Ferri, 2007).

The passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 and the reauthorization as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, put into place accountability measures for marginalized students that were not yet supported in inclusive settings under a traditional educational model. IDEA provided a platform for educators, families, and communities to come together to change philosophy and practice around educational practices. In 2004, IDEA mandated that students with disabilities have access to general education as well as support to make meaningful progress on the goals outlined in Individualized Education Plans (IEP) (IDEA, 2004). In 2017, the Supreme Court Case of *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* ruled that each student has a right to learn in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible. More specifically, students not only have the right to learn in the general education setting, but the education should be appropriately rigorous, contain meaningful and challenging objectives, and be strengths based in that there is a focus on the potential for student growth and success (Wehmeyer, 2019).

Despite this landmark court case, many individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with ESN continue to receive much of their education in self-contained settings

(Kurth et al., 2015). Data from the US Department of Education's (2021) 43rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA indicated that for students ages 5 through 21, with Intellectual Disability (ID), only 16.6% were included in the general education setting 80-100% of their day, 27.9% included 40-79% of their day, and 48.7% of students with ID were only included in general education 0-39% of their school day. For students with multiple disabilities only 14.3% of students were included in the general education setting 80-100% of their day, 17.8% included 40-79% of their day, and 44.9% were included for 0-39% of their school day. This shows a huge disparity regarding how beliefs and assumptions may be barring inclusive education at the national level (Agran, 2020). To reconceptualize how we view inclusive education, a shift in mindset in philosophy and practice is required to support all individuals across all environments (Baglieri et al., 2011).

Ableism and Inclusive Education

Currently, we can draw from thirty plus years of research showing that when students of all abilities learn together, they experience better academic, behavioral, and social outcomes, along with higher high school graduation rates and post-school success (SWIFT Center, 2017). However, schools continue to struggle with aspects of implementing inclusive education. Reasons for resistance may include “(a) perceptions of competence and resulting placement policies, (b) economic and demographic stratification, (c) biases, (d) teacher preparation and experience, (e) lack of resources and capacity, and (f) absence of knowledge of current research” (Agran, 2020, pp. 6). These reasons for resistance are perpetuated by ableist belief systems present within school communities and hinder site-based change efforts, let alone efforts around scaling and sustainability of inclusive systems. This may be due to the lack of consensus around definitions of inclusion which perpetuates the continued siloing of students (Waitoller & Artiles,

2013). Furthermore, of the definitions of inclusion that do exist, they are often representative of a deficits-based ideology whereby the concern is around perceived student ability as compared to normative benchmarks (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). This perception can lead to an ideology that subsequently requires students to prove their readiness for general education versus ensuring general education supports all learners (Thorius, 2019). This perpetuates deficit-oriented beliefs about students and assumptions of who belongs and who does not belong (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017).

These weaponized assumptions warrant questions such as “Inclusion into what? Who benefits from inclusion? Where are these students included? What are the consequences of who benefits and where inclusion is enacted?” (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007, p. 352). This level of questioning and attention is important because without it implicit and dangerous assumptions may lurk within an inclusive agenda that seeks to normalize and assimilate students (Kozleski et al., 2014). Due to the tensions that exist in the field of special education, the general education environment is often something students must earn their way into through assimilation. DSE scholarship asserts that, “instead of proving that you have the right to be in, you start with the right to be in” (Connor & Ferri, 2007 p.66). Furthermore, DSE scholarship calls out the foundations and infrastructure of special education as being built on the concept of disability as an impairment that needs fixing, cutting, or remediation (Baglieri et al., 2011b). The extant literature on inclusive education highlights how despite special education being a service to students, it has been weaponized as an oppressive force (Connor & Ferri, 2007). This force has designed the educational system after the “mythical normal child” (Baglieri et al., 2011b, p. 2129) and is just one example of the systems of power present that promote these social

constructions of what it means to be normal, different, or impaired (Linton, 1998; Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

Need for Transformative Change

To dismantle oppressive ideologies, a transformative approach may be one way to facilitate change by defining the core issues of the cultural-historical side of inclusive education and the nature of community and participation (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). While definitions of inclusion range from being about educational placement to the transformation of belief systems, engaging definitions of inclusion need to center inclusion as social justice to work towards transformation (Artiles et al., 2006). Traditionally, discussion about inclusion falls into either conversations aligned with justification discourse and/or implementation discourse. In this context discourse refers to ideas or ideology, as well as the working attitudes and courses of action that are part of societies' social practice (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). For example, justification discourse is leveraged as a way to call attention to the roles schools play in reproducing inequalities, while implementation discourse focuses on the ways in which inclusion can be carried out (Artiles et al., 2006). Justification discourse also acknowledges that while special education origins were designed to support a neglected population, the existence of a separate system (i.e., general education and special education) itself prevents systemic change (Artiles et al., 2006). As such, the role of power impacts forward momentum in dismantling a segregated system as people in privileged positions (e.g., school psychologists, special education teachers) have the power to construct and control decisions based on the specific knowledge base they hold (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

Furthermore, implementation discourse looks at the political and pragmatic effects on special education indicating that the promotion of an inclusive education system requires

political actions to address inequitable conditions that affect oppressed individuals or groups (Artiles et al., 2006). Thus, future models of inclusive education need to be centered around a transformative view of social justice that seeks to examine ideological and historical assumptions about difference, as well as critiques marginalization, debunks merit-based school cultures, and distributes resources to support meaningful engagement of an entire student body (Artiles et al., 2006). To establish a transformative system, school leaders play an important role throughout the implementation process.

The previous section discussing ableism and inclusive education explains the role of ideology in the decision-making process. Since ideology is influenced by lived experiences it impacts individual agency—people can choose what to advocate for and how to advocate for it. Therefore, school leaders have an important role in creating cultures of support and collaboration free from negative environmental factors to formulate a shared vision and goals for inclusionary practices (Pedaste et al., 2021). Thus, it is important for inclusionary practices leaders to facilitate the development of shared visions and action plans that include learners with ESN. Furthermore, the facilitation of a common vision and school/district wide understanding of the change process will increase the degree with which individuals within a system share ownership for their change efforts (Agran, 2020).

In summary, due to the deep-seated belief systems that have permeated societal systems through unconscious bias, deep cultural transformation is needed for inclusive education to achieve and sustain meaningful change (Baglieri et al., 2011b). Defining inclusion as a moral imperative is one such way systems can deconstruct ableism and create communities that embrace differences (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). This study responds to the call to action to invite a greater plurality of perspectives about the nature of disability and recognize the profound

implications this raises for future inclusive educational research leading the way for transformational change (Baglieri et al, 2011a). Thus, the goal of the broader study is to explore how inclusionary practice leaders are actively engaging with inclusionary principles and practices to bring about transformative change across their district. While there are many inclusive principles and practices to implement, the decision regarding what specific inclusionary principles and practices to leverage and why is explained in Chapter 2's review of the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 1 of this research provided a brief overview of the history of inclusive education, discussed how ableism persists in inclusive education, and highlights the need for transformative change in schools. This chapter will engage with literature from the respective fields of critical inclusive education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007) and disability studies in education (DSE) (Baglieri et al., 2011a) to understand how research has informed specific inclusionary practices to aid in transformative change efforts. The reviewed literature in this chapter has been intentionally selected due to its focus on students with extensive support needs (ESN), as this population is traditionally missing from literature focused on schoolwide inclusive reform. Additionally, this chapter will include research on the effectiveness of inclusive education for students with ESN, a review of specific inclusionary principles and practices that have shown to be effective in supporting students with ESN in general education, the role and impact of school leaders in inclusive school wide reform efforts, and finally a discussion of gaps in the literature.

Inclusive Settings Produce Better Outcomes

The field of special education has 30 plus years of research documenting that when students of all abilities learn together, they experience better academic, behavioral, and social outcomes along with higher high school graduation rates and post-school success (Cole et al., 2004; Gee et al., 2020; SWIFT Center, 2017; Travers & Carter, 2022). For individuals with ESN, education in general education settings has shown to promote greater academic growth (Jackson et al., 2008; Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010; Shogren et al., 2015), increased communication and social interactions (Carter et al., 2016; Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Hunt et al., 1994; Kennedy et al., 1997) and increased self-determination skills (Hughes, et al., 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2007). Despite this research, students with ESN continue to be placed in mostly

segregated settings which may indicate the pervasive problem with negative perceptions of disability which leads to various interpretations of inclusion (Kurth et al., 2014). These ableist ideologies seek to use disability labels to silo individuals into programs such as Autism programs or life skills programs (Giangreco, 2020). This othering is problematic as disability labels have become the driving force behind placement decisions restricting access to general education which should be the default placement (Brock, 2018). Furthermore, this has led to the creation of an increasingly separate institution, special education, which has its own practices, regulations, and staff (Connor & Ferri, 2007). The separate institution of special education, while seen by some as a service, has grown and positioned itself as an oppressive force (Connor & Ferri, 2007), leaving students with ESN with limited or no access to general education settings, curriculum, and their peers.

The following reviewed studies all indicate that when students with ESN are taught in inclusive settings, they have greater outcomes than students with ESN taught in segregated settings (Mansouri et al., 2022). The studies included in this review focus specifically on students with ESN in inclusive settings. These studies discuss the growth students with ESN displayed across a variety of grade levels and domains while also providing discussion regarding the continuation of placement decisions being made on factors other than student characteristics and support needs (Brock, 2018). The reviewed studies have been broken down into the themes of communication and social connectedness, generalization and self-determination, and rigorous and meaningful education.

Communication and Social Connectedness

To evaluate the effects of placement of students with ESN, research by Hunt et al. (1994) indicated that students being educated in inclusive environments achieved significantly higher

results overall in regard to engagement in activities and participation and initiation in social interactions. Similarly, research by Fryxell and Kennedy (1995) and a scoping review and appraisal by Iacono et al., 2022, showed that students with ESN included in general education have increased social interactions and contact with peers which led to larger friendship networks and more engagement within class activities than students with ESN not included in general education. The results of these studies offer clear evidence that the least restrictive environment provides greater social outcomes for students with ESN (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Iacono et al., 2022). While both studies demonstrate increased social connectedness and communication at the elementary level, they did not touch on the effects of placement for students with ESN at the intermediate or secondary levels. Replication of the studies by Hunt et al. (1994) and Fryxell and Kennedy (1995) at the intermediate level also indicated more social interactions, more contact with peers, and higher levels of social communication (Kennedy et al., 1997).

These findings supported the earlier studies indicating the benefits of general education settings for social communication and increased belonging due to the larger peer networks developed. Finally, a reviewed study by Fisher and Meyer (2002) compared outcome data for students with ESN in childhood development and social competence. Overall, the students who were in the inclusive group made significant gains on the developmental measures and made higher social competence gains in comparison to the group in the self-contained setting (Fisher & Meyer, 2002). Perhaps most notably was the recent study by Iacono et al., 2022 which reviewed 28 studies for quality as it related to individuals with ESN who used Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods/devices in inclusive settings. Findings support previously made claims as well as the new finding, to best support AAC use in general education with non-disabled peers, observation must be done first allowing peers to interact without adult

intervention. Support should then be provided after observation that seeks to enhance the opportunities to allow students to share experiences. This study also indicates the greater availability of peers as communication partners as well as the ways in which communication was able to be practiced in more naturalistic ways in inclusive settings leading to greeted generalization of the skill and greater attempts at self-determined behavior.

Generalization and Self-Determination

The aforementioned studies discuss not only greater progress in communication and other social opportunities, but they also highlight the increased access students with ESN must participate with a variety of communication partners in real time. Meaning, students who are taught skills in segregated settings will not have as many opportunities to learn in a meaningful way which may lead to a decrease in utilizing those skills outside of the special day class. Furthermore, the ideology that students should practice skills in isolation before being allowed to be part of general education perpetuates the ableist assumption that general education is a place that you must earn your way into (Thorius, 2019). Additionally, this perspective also decreases self-determination in students with ESN. When individuals can learn in inclusive settings such as in the community, students are provided with greater opportunities to make choices and express preferences (Wehmeyer et al., 2007). Making choices and expressing preferences supports individuals in becoming self-determined individuals which leads to greater markers of fulfillment in life (Wehmeyer et al., 2007).

Modeled after Wehmeyer et al. (2007), a study by Hughes et al. (2013) found that students with ESN primarily educated in general education settings at the secondary level reported more opportunities to work on specified self-determination skills than their counterparts (Hughes et al., 2013). Another positive dimension of this study was its focus on participants self-

reporting about their experiences and meaningful inclusive experiences. Overall, the study highlighted the importance for students to receive more opportunities to be able to learn to make choices, self-advocate, and pilot their own decision making (Shogren et al., 2007). Additionally, inclusive settings present frequent changes in routine to work on skills outside of the often highly structured and restrictive special education spaces. Finally, although the carefully planned repeated instruction that is often done in segregated spaces can be beneficial, it is not equivalent to the power of learning in the inclusive context with involvement from general education teachers and non-disabled peers (Mansouri et al., 2022).

Rigorous and Meaningful Education

While the reviewed studies have shown that students receive more access and opportunities to work on skill domains such as communication and self-determination in inclusive settings, students with ESN are also demonstrating greater outcomes in reading and writing when educated in general education (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). Kurth and Mastergeorge's (2010) findings indicated that students in fully inclusive settings and students in self-contained settings had no significant difference between groups on measures of adaptive behavior or intelligence. The academic data they collected indicated that students with ESN who were included in general education obtained higher scores in all academic areas including abstract and inferential skills as compared to students in self-contained settings (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). While all mentioned studies demonstrated the positive effects of inclusive education, findings also called to attention the various ways in which educators viewed students across the general education and self-contained settings. For example, the rationale behind placement in general education or self-contained settings was primarily done based on individual, school, or district policy/philosophy (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). Another finding

indicated that teachers increased the quality of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and subsequent instruction for students with ESN who were included in general education settings as compared to segregated special education settings (Hunt et al., 1994). This supports the importance of moving past the historic focus of narrowly defined skills towards general education class curriculum for all students and rethinking what educational teams are setting as IEP goals (Gee et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate the problems with the existence of programs based on ability (Giangreco, 2020). Finally, it is important to note that the students with ESN who were part of these studies were not just placed in general education, but their participation and curriculum were specially designed and collaborated on amongst groups of educators (Kennedy et al., 1997). This highlights the importance of a scope and sequence and collaboration when lesson planning, to instruct all learners, as well as to provide challenging and appropriate curriculum to students to cultivate a range of skills (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010).

Overall, findings from the reviewed studies confirm that when students with ESN are taught in inclusive settings, they consistently demonstrate better academic and social growth than learners with ESN in segregated settings. However, placement alone does not determine growth (Mansouri et al., 2022; Quirk et al., 2017). To best support learners with ESN in general education, the implementation of inclusionary principles and practices are needed to elevate the instructional practices of inclusive education so that all students, especially students with ESN, benefit from this social justice initiative (Artiles et al., 2006).

Inclusionary Principles and Practices

Transformational change based on social justice ideologies is supportive of creating more supportive learning environments for all students and shows how inclusive education can be leveraged as a means to achieve equity for all. Studies by Shogren et al. (2015) and Kurth et al.

(2015) followed identified schools to learn more about inclusive school transformation as well as explore how to implement inclusive practices for students with ESN. Research by Shogren et al. (2015) explored how schools were defining inclusion, how perspectives were embodied in school practices, and how perspectives informed school transformation. Results and discussion from this study indicated that all schools boasted strong school culture, had strong administrative leadership, and had inclusive policy structures in place that supported the building of strong MTSS frameworks through specific inclusionary practices (Shogren et al., 2015).

Kurth et al. (2015) built upon the need for further research to understand how specific evidence-based practices such as cultures of belonging, collaboration, and engagement are implemented to support students with ESN. They identified seven broad themes that all sites leveraged to support students with ESN. These themes included teaching arrangement, engagement, general classroom supports, specific student supports, specific educational activities, interactions with peers, and the opportunity for students to make meaningful choices in their education and across their day (Kurth et al., 2015 p. 261). The specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support students with ESN across each site were not dictated, but rather the result of collaboration around which inclusionary principles and practices made sense to develop and implement in their respective contexts. The inclusionary practices that were utilized were self-determination, peer support to support community and belonging, active learning strategies, cooperative learning strategies, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), co-teaching/co-planning, and embedded instruction (Kurth et al., 2015). Overall, each school site creatively used staff and resources to support students in the inclusive setting without segregating them from their peers.

These aforementioned studies and others like them all include research that is inclusive of students with ESN and indicate the effectiveness of inclusive educational and social opportunities for all learners, but especially learners with ESN. The research is clear that students with ESN achieve at higher rates across all domains in the general education setting versus self-contained settings (Agran et al., 2020). In reviewing the literature, the themes of strong commitments to creating cultures of belonging, fostering collaboration, and opportunities for meaningful engagement and access have been identified as necessary in creating and sustaining inclusive schools that are supportive of learners with ESN in general education. The following inclusionary principles and practices are pivotal to supporting schools and districts in building and sustaining inclusive schools and are backed by research as being principles and practices that are supportive of learners with ESN.

Creating Cultures of Belonging

As previously mentioned, placement decisions for students with disabilities have often occurred based on the belief systems of adults which has led to the perpetuation of segregated spaces for students with ESN (Brock, 2018; Agran et al., 2020). A barrier related to this is the inconsistent interpretation of the law (i.e., IDEA) and is largely because there is no unifying definition of inclusion. This barrier is caused by different laws, beliefs, practices, and access to resources (Mirajur Rhaman Shaoan & Namanyane, 2022). Additionally, the effort to reach a unifying definition of inclusion is exasperated by politics and the difficulty humanity has with change (Mirajur Rhaman Shaoan & Namanyane, 2022). The lack of a unifying definition creates tensions among those within the system that are doing their best to further the work and is related to the many ways in which students and educators are siloed. This speaks to the frustrations of

many who desire a unifying definition to support the growth and scaling of more inclusive opportunities.

Waitoller and Artiles (2013) explored the importance of defining inclusive education in inclusive transformation, defining how it should be studied, and how teachers further their understanding of inclusion in relation to professional development. Their 2013 study provided insight into inclusive education definitions leading to the discovery and description of three definitions of inclusive education: (1) concern regarding differences in ability, (2) concern with changing the curriculum, and (3) inclusion as a process of overcoming barriers. The first definition they identified in the literature indicated that inclusive education is concerned with differences in ability (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). This definition highlights the deficits-based ideology permeating society as a result of the systems of power that create social constructions of normalcy (Linton, 1998). The second definition was more encouraging and indicated a concern with, “changing the curriculum to take into account general and cultural differences, but overlooked ability differences” (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 324). This definition shows progress related to new thinking around what is and is not normal related to culture and experiences. Finally, the study's third definition defined inclusive education as, “a process of overcoming barriers to participation and learning for all students (students with diverse abilities, cultures, gender, and racial/ethnic background)” (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 324). This third definition indicates a greater mission and vision to include more historically marginalized individuals, beyond just students with disabilities, in inclusive education.

The connection to overcoming barriers is especially important in regard to how teachers support all learners and resist the notion of inclusion as assimilation (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016). Inclusion is not about fixing something that fits into an idea or definition, but rather a way

to celebrate each other through community with each other. In other words, a focus on how individuals feel like they belong in places and spaces is not only paramount to the inclusion of individuals with ESN, but also important to dismantling educator silos across systems.

Dimensions of Belonging. Carter and Biggs (2021) define belonging as occurring when students are present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, involved, supported, heard, befriended, and needed. These ten dimensions of belonging support meaningful inclusion of students with and without disabilities through the creation of learning communities where all students flourish. Creating cultures of belonging is an essential inclusionary practice to support the end of exclusion and segregation for students with ESN (Agran et al., 2020). Belonging extends to teacher leaders as well through the shared ownership and partnership to deliver strong instructional practices and individualized support for all students, especially students with ESN, through collaboration. Simply put, “belonging is a human need for all people (Carter & Biggs, 2021). To uphold commitments to equity as inclusion, building inclusive mission and vision statements supports the denormalization regarding ways institutions formulate rules that seek to control resources and access (Artiles et al., 2006). Engaging with the complexities of any mission and vision statement helps to create lasting and meaningful cultures of belonging in a school community.

Inclusive Mission and Vision. To create inclusive school communities, the inclusive practice of building an inclusive mission and vision can assist in dismantling the barrier of what inclusion should look like and who is included in the definition. Firstly, an inclusive mission and vision is defined by the goals and aspirations of a school and its educational team (Berry, 2011). The mission and vision statement should seek to include the belief that every student be celebrated and an accepted member of their community. This statement describes the beliefs and

culture of the schools and sets out to clearly state a belief in the inclusion of all individuals regardless of perceived ability. Lastly, this statement reflects the schools' intentions, targets, and values as a whole (Berry, 2011).

Establishing this level of collaboration on a shared vision is important as these vision and mission statements are at the core of all decision making within a school community (Smith & Leonard, 2005). As such, these mission and vision statements inform the equitable practices and overall goals of the school. The collaboration required of creating inclusive mission and vision statements aids in numerous outcomes for all. Specifically, staff are more accountable for the needs of all students as well as students benefiting from positive social, academic, and community membership because of the collaborative inclusive mission and vision statements (Smith & Leonard, 2005). Once formed, mission and vision statements require oversight to ensure that they are understood and upheld.

Collaborative Structures

Inclusive education is inherently a collaborative process. As such there will be barriers to collaboration along the way. Some barriers to collaboration include building trust with colleagues, maintaining cultural reciprocity, remaining equity-focused, and being person centered (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). To build capacity for strong equity-based collaboration, time should be devoted to supporting teachers in their teams through conversations and modeling how to interrupt inequities (Aguilar, 2016). Fostering collaboration amongst adults and students supports building cultures of belonging and is one of the many critical elements of inclusive education to ensure that all students are receiving appropriately rigorous and meaningfully tailored instruction. Many people work together to facilitate inclusive learning experiences and with that comes various partnerships such as between school teams (general education teachers,

special education teachers, specialists, etc.), school-family partnerships, and child-teacher partnerships (Aguilar, 2016). Collaboration is an essential practice to break down the walls that have historically excluded the most marginalized students (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). Some ways collaboration can be cultivated and implemented in the school setting are through co-planning, co-teaching, inclusive master schedules, and flexible service delivery. These collaborative approaches may work together to support collaboration and sustained equitable systems and structures.

Co-Planning and Co-Teaching. To create educational opportunities that are flexible, support student growth areas, and help students reach their goals, school teams can leverage the inclusionary practices of co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing (Murawski, 2012). During the co-planning process, the curriculum is designed to leverage the expertise of multiple planning members. Co-planning teams often consist of a general education teacher who is the core content expert and a special education teacher who is a skills and strategies expert. Together they plan for individual learning needs to support progress towards the learning objective as well as to leverage two adults in the room to support effective co-teaching (Murawski, 2012). Co-teaching can be used during instructional time where two or more professionals deliver instruction to a diverse and blended groups of students (Cook & Friend, 2017). There are six co-teaching models that can be leveraged at any given time as decided by the teaching teams to best meet the needs of learners. These six co-teaching models are described as one teach/one observe, one teach/one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching (Cook & Friend, 2017).

Proper implementation of co-teaching requires the co-planning process to center open and honest communication that relies on a positive strength-based approach to create, refine, and

implement appropriately rigorous lessons (Murawski, 2012). An additional benefit is that collaborative teams work together to create lessons that are mindful of and think creatively about diversity, equity, and inclusion to enhance student learning (Franzen & Benavides, 2023). Engagement in high quality collaborative plans can be a transformative process that supports growth towards sustainable change (Franzen & Benavides, 2023). Finally, the ability for teaching teams to come together to determine a plan to meet the needs of all learners requires flexibility regarding service delivery as well as a master schedule that is reflective of commitments to high quality collaboration to support all learners.

Inclusive Building Schedules to Support Flexible Service Delivery. However great or well-intentioned a school team can be about leveraging co-teaching and co-planning, this work is difficult to achieve without the support of an inclusive master schedule and a commitment to strong tier 1 instruction that includes flexible service delivery. Master schedules provide the structural support that identifies what content students learn, where they learn, and who they learn from at any given time in their school day (Kussin, 2008). Expanding on traditional master schedules, inclusive building schedules are more focused on how to support high quality instruction that account for the range of diversity in schools (Giangreco & Suter, 2015). To support a diverse student population, resource mapping can be leveraged as a tool/strategy to ensure that all school resources remain available to any student regardless of disability, which leads to a greater percentage of instruction coming from highly qualified teachers (Giangreco & Suter, 2015). This approach extends to the flexible use of paraeducators across more than one domain and not just reserving this adult support for those in special education. At the secondary level, many inclusive building schedules have adopted block scheduling as a way in which they are thinking more equitably regarding student needs as block scheduling has been shown to

increase student achievement, improve critical thinking skills, enhance school climates, provide more opportunities for active student-initiated learning, as well as provide more collaboration/co-planning opportunities (Buckman et al., 1994). Furthermore, teachers report block scheduling to be complementary to the practices of co-teaching and co-planning especially for planning for learners with disabilities (Weller & McLesky, 2000).

For inclusive building schedules to support the needs of all students, emphasis must also be placed on the school to design environments that remove barriers to inclusion for all students, including those with ESN (Giangreco & Suter, 2015). This supports a move towards meaningful change whereby schools are disrupting the history of positioning students as the problem (Garrett, 2022). Implementation of the inclusionary principle of inclusive building schedules requires ongoing reflection to analyze and disrupt social processes that produce inequity (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). With a structure in place that supports the needs of all students, focused, intentional, and engaging instruction can occur leveraging resources of an entire building (Giangreco & Suter, 2015).

Meaningful Engagement

The previously discussed inclusionary practices associated with fostering cultures of belonging and collaboration connects to the third theme in the literature, meaningful engagement. When students are engaged in general education core content, it means that they are receiving instruction that is aligned with grade level state standards in each content area, which is a requirement for all students including those with ESN (Sabia et al., 2020). To meet the needs of all learners in general education and support access and engagement to grade level content, the inclusionary practices of differentiation, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) can be leveraged (Quirk et al., 2017).

Differentiation. Differentiation is a commonly used practice by teachers in which teachers tailor the instruction to meet a variety of learning profiles (Subban, 2006).

Differentiation provides students with greater opportunities to access material in ways that are often tied to the accommodations and/or modifications in a student's IEP or 504 Plan.

Differentiated instruction includes four main principles: (1) understanding the level of *content* a student needs, (2) understanding how students *process* information, (3) understanding what type of *product* would suit the learner, and (4) understanding how to make changes to the *learning environment* for optimal learning (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Each of the differentiated learning principles support providing strategies to tailor instruction and increase access (Tomlinson et al., 2003). For students with ESN, the process of differentiation identifies the needs for specific supports and makes the learning *personally relevant* for each student (Trela & Jimenez, 2013).

The term “personally relevant,” seeks to move away from the perception that students with ESN need “life skills instruction” and shifts towards creating scaffolds to better access the skills and concepts taught in general education in a way that is meaningful (Trela & Jimenez, 2013).

However, researchers indicate that for students with ESN, consistent oversight is needed when differentiating lessons and materials to ensure that differentiation is used as a mechanism to support learning and not to create a different curriculum for students with ESN altogether (Trela & Jimenez, 2013).

Universal Design for Learning. Building from differentiation, the UDL framework is another inclusive pedagogy that seeks to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn (CAST, 2018). However, UDL seeks to identify proactive strategies to support lesson creation whereas differentiation is typically implemented after the lesson has been planned. To support the pre-planning of UDL, it utilizes

a framework that identifies three important principles (i.e., engagement: the *why* of learning, representation: the *what* of learning, & action/expression: the *how* of learning) that work together to support increased accessibility to learning as well as to increase student success (CAST, 2018). Central to UDL's framework is the belief that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment and not the student (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Thus, UDL takes a strengths-based approach focusing on student strengths rather than solely on needs (Baglieri et al., 2011; Johnson et al, 2023) and actively works to eliminate barriers during the planning process versus solely relying on differentiation strategies on the fly during instruction (CAST, 2018). For individuals with ESN in general education settings, this framework helps to assist teachers to be able to design and implement instruction that is universally flexible, contains multiple choices, and has multiple ways to engage based on interest (Cook & Rao, 2018). To support the reconceptualization of education, specific UDL strategies to support learners with ESN can be implemented.

Common strategies to support learners with ESN in general education using the UDL framework include explicit instruction, turn and talks, think-alouds, graphic organizers, and other visual supports (Johnson et al, 2023). These strategies are seen as universally appropriate tools for all learners but are especially supportive for students with ESN. Additionally, blending assistive technology (AT) tools with the UDL principles enriches instruction for students with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) needs as the collaboration offers further choice and flexibility through the use of low tech tools (e.g., pencil grips, writing, drawing, gesturing) and high tech tools (i.e., iPad or a tablet with speech generating voice software) (Deliso & Bukaty, 2019). Leveraging the UDL framework to plan for individual student communication preferences increased meaningful participation and engagement in the general

education setting. However, while these strategies are supportive in increasing participation (Johnson et al, 2023), often educators struggle to build skills and knowledge around the learning goal. For example, Root et al. (2021) suggests that to best support students with ESN in understanding grade level math concepts, it is important to engage in collaborative planning to creatively build accessible lessons from the start rather than relying on the provision of various supports on the fly during instruction. Collaborative planning is most effective when standards are identified, followed by prioritizing learning goals, linking the standard to real word contexts, and anticipating variability (Root et al., 2021). Planning intentionally around these four steps not only increases positive outcomes for students with ESN, but it supports the UDL vision of creating expert learners that recognize the importance of learner variability which supports the normalization of difference (Cook & Rao, 2018). When differences are normalized, individuals have greater opportunities to understand their strength and growth areas which helps to increase individual participation and self-determination in their learning (Cook & Rao, 2018). This echoes DSE literature which speaks to the importance of positioning students within the systems of power and oppression that exist to reveal the ways ableist systems and structures persist in schools that create barriers to success (Connor et al., 2020).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) is another inclusionary practice highlighted in this review which supports the inclusion of individuals with ESN as it seeks to make teaching and learning relevant and responsive to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices of students across categories of difference and inequality (Paris, 2012). Additionally, CSP aims to counter deficit views and challenges teachers to envision and enact pedagogies that are not filtered through a lens of contempt and pity but instead center conversations around the strengths and power behind pluralistic societies (Paris, 2012). Thus,

CSP's asset-based pedagogy provides a lens in which students' cultural differences are seen as powerful and valuable tools to support the interpretation of academic content (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016) in ways that are personally relevant and honor preferences (Trela & Jimenez, 2013). Critical to the work of inclusive education scholarship is recognizing disability as part of multiple intersecting identities to raise the consciousness of ableism in society (Kulkarni et al., 2023).

Leveraging CSP requires constant interrogation and critique to reimagine and reorganize classroom spaces for needed transformation (Kulkarni et al., 2023). When involved in interrogation and critique, CSP requires educators to consider asking, "for what purposes and with what outcomes" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). In response to this, educators should seek opportunities that are culturally sustaining rather than responsive to dismantle systems of power and privilege (Paris, 2012). In a recent study, Kulkarni et al. (2023) discuss the importance of defining all students to specifically call out students with ESN as well as other marginalized groups in the collaborative planning process. Lesson planning with a CSP lens can support accounting for the complex identities and cultures students bring into the spaces that have historically marginalized students with dis/abilities (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016) and shift towards the creation of spaces where students do more than survive, but thrive (Love, 2019).

Implementation of action plans around inclusionary principles and practices such as differentiation, UDL, and CSP can provide a road map to support ongoing reflection and action planning through conversations centered on resisting culturally defined standards that produce inequity (Connor et al., 2020; Siuty, 2019). Teachers cannot implement and improve inclusive education on their own, collective engagement is needed with administrators, family members, and policymakers to enact sustainable change (Garrett, 2022; Miller et al., 2020). Leadership

plays an important role in supporting the systems, processes, and contexts to continue to propel the work of inclusive education forward (Miller et al., 2020).

Role of Inclusive Leadership

Transformative work in any context requires strong leaders; however, schools do not often acknowledge or capitalize on the natural strengths that exist in a community (Berg, 2018; Ishimaru, 2019). All individuals across a system have specific expertise that can be leveraged to improve teaching and learning in support of inclusive education. In this respect, leadership has been described as not something one is, but rather as something that is learned (Levin & Schrum, 2016). In a 2007 study, Theoharis describes good leadership as occurring when equity minded principles are centered to focus on creating successful schools that improve the educational and human condition of marginalized students. This definition supports the continued need to create and support leaders in creating spaces where all community members are welcomed, valued, and can fully participate (SWIFT Center, 2017). This section seeks to define the role of inclusive building leaders (i.e., school principals) as well as the role of multidisciplinary leadership teams (e.g., teachers, families) and the influence distributive leadership has on supporting educator agency in creating inclusive school communities.

Administrative Leadership

When conditions around belonging and equity do not exist in schools, administrators have the professional authority and obligation to advance school reform efforts aimed at improving inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities (Waldron et al., 2011). Administrators can engage in and make decisions around shaping teaching and learning (Roberts et al., 2018) as well as provide oversight and guidance related to school wide transformation toward fostering cultures that are supportive of inclusion (McCart et al., 2014; Shogren et al.,

2015). Furthermore, administrators that are knowledgeable about special education, disability, and inclusion can establish high expectations and redistribute resources to create and sustain effective inclusive schools (DeMathews & Mueller, 2022). Regarding central or district office leaders, support from these supervisory leaders is necessary for schools to build inclusive school cultures without having to find “work arounds” to inequitable district policies and procedures (Shogren et al., 2015, p. 180). The research is clear in that strong administrative leadership is the key to inclusive reform (Shogren et al., 2015), but while school and district administrators play a key role, they make up only one position amongst a larger and more diverse group of stakeholders that are involved in supporting students with ESN (Roberts et al., 2018).

Distributed Leaderships Teams

Schools and districts benefit from strong, innovative site based administrative leadership (DeMathews & Mueller, 2022; Roberts et al., 2018); however, administrators work alongside a large group of stakeholders who are also involved in the visioning and instruction of high-quality education for students ESN (Shogren et al., 2015). When stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teacher leaders, support staff, families, and students) come together, they create common visions of instruction that are based on advances in research and the mutual belief about the capability of learners as well as supporting greater instructional practices for students with ESN (Roberts et al., 2018). Distributive leadership among key stakeholders is one contributing factor to school success (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). However, distributed leadership teams should be made up of small equity focused groups that work to examine how power operates within their contexts to formulate strategies for collectively addressing the inequity towards building equitable learning environments for all students (Alvarez, 2019; Ishimaru, 2019).

Additionally, findings from research also suggest that resources are not what holds schools back from being inclusive. Schools with access to the same resources were able to be inclusive through the flexible thinking that inclusive leaders showed by leveraging their resources differently through collaboration with all stakeholders (Shogren et al., 2015). This collaboration and collective effort in inclusive schools becomes part of the success of inclusive environments as teams are built with the mindset that they are better as a collective and feel empowered to learn and grow together (Shogren et al., 2015). This shared decision-making power supports those closest to the work as the experts best positioned to make decisions and problem solve (Ishimaru, 2019). When committed inclusive leaders notice a gap, collaborative partners can come together and engage to enhance the positive dimensions of a school's performance while simultaneously collecting data to support organizational reform (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Finally, while the connection between individual attitudes and beliefs as it relates to inclusive education is well known, individuals within a system can have vastly different definitions and expectations based on experiences which may lead to the disruption of a team's ability to change systems (Gourd, 2015). As such, inclusive leadership teams need to work to support intentional and strategic actions around developing positive experiences with inclusive education to support individual agency towards inclusion (Naraian, 2014).

Supporting Educator Agency

To move away from inequity towards inclusive education requires the disruption of traditional educator identities that continue to perpetuate segregated schooling practices. As such, professional development, coaching, and guidance from inclusionary practice leaders requires collaboration to support educator agency that is more supportive of students with disabilities (Miller et al, 2020). Agency has been defined in multiple ways including, as the

capacity to impact systems (e.g., schools, classrooms) within schooling contexts (Gourd, 2015); the indivisibility of personal attributes and schools contexts (Naraian & Schlesinger, 2018); as the freedom and flexibility to interpret and react to imposed environments in order to intentionally re-construct contexts (An & Meaney, 2015); as collaborative action through the active collection of tools and strategies used by people to facilitate student proximity and activity with one another (Stockall & Gartin, 2002); and as “active” in that teachers move beyond their underlying beliefs about the value of inclusive education, towards what they are actively thinking about, planning for, and anticipating barriers to inclusion (Hutchinson et al., 2015). These definitions of agency describe the influence members of a school system have in how they think about and include individuals within a system.

As inclusionary practice leaders work to increase inclusive opportunities, they need to be supported in recognizing spaces for agency as it exists through ongoing reflection and change in practice (Miller et al., 2020). This is especially important for students with ESN as it is evident that there has been a shift in the field to focus on the content and effective practices of inclusion (Kurth, 2015; Morningstar et al., 2015). In other words, to support a shift from *why* we should include students, we need to provide teachers with meaningful collaboration to support agency around *how* to meaningfully include individuals with ESN. Inclusionary practices such as those previously mentioned (i.e., co-teaching, co-planning, inclusive building schedule, UDL, differentiation, CSP) are strategies teachers can intentionally leverage that support the facilitation of inclusive education for students with ESN. In their review of the literature, Miller et al., (2020) described instructional strategies to be the most frequently discussed agentic action strategy along with teaming that educators can take to support inclusion. Regarding teaming/collaboration, participants reported benefiting from the cultivation of collective agency

rather than individual agency (Miller et al., 2020) as they were able to problem solve, share ideas, and support one another.

Research on inclusive education and teacher agency is understood to be dynamic, actionable, and collective (Miller et al., 2020). Thus, inclusive leadership is needed to build collective membership where its diverse members are valued for their expertise and problem-solving abilities (Ashikali et al., 2021; Ishimaru, 2019). Taking time and investing in resources to build strong cultures with shared values around inclusion with all stakeholders supports sustainable growth (Shogren et al., 2015). This, in turn, supports teachers' capacity to impact systems through agency (Gourd, 2015). Furthermore, it is important that schools and districts committed to inclusive education for individuals with ESN continue to engage in ongoing collaboration and reflection to challenge problematic perceptions that perpetuate negative stereotypes about students with ESN (Roberts et al, 2018). When communities come together to engage in dialogue about equity and inclusive education, schools will have greater potential to provide students with the self-determination skills to live meaningful, purposeful, connected, and impactful lives (DeMathews & Mueller, 2022). The following sections discuss the need for further research to continue to work towards transformative change in schools for individuals for ESN.

Gaps in the Literature

Following an examination of the literature, many scholars indicate a need for additional research regarding the growth and development of inclusive schools in general, as well as ensuring the inclusion of students with ESN in those plans. More specifically, this commentary highlights the need for literature regarding district scaling efforts to support growth and sustainability surrounding the inclusion of students with ESN (Shogren et al., 2015). There is an

additional need for specific research on the effectiveness of specific inclusive strategies to support learners with ESN (Agran et al., 2020; Kurth et al., 2015) as well as research to investigate the systems, processes, and constructs (e.g., social, ideological, political) that constrain teacher agency for inclusive education (Miller et al., 2020).

Effective Supports for Students with ESN

While the research is clear that educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings can increase learning expectations for all students (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010), less is known regarding the effective strategies that can be used to support students with ESN in those settings. For example, while scholars consider UDL to be a practice that supports learners to be able to reach lesson objectives in meaningful and flexible ways, the existing research on inclusive pedagogy primarily involves students with high incidence disabilities or mild support needs as the primary focus (e.g., Cook & Rao, 2018; Lowery et al., 2017). Additionally, further research is needed to explore the effective strategies that can be adapted to the general education setting and leveraged by general education teachers rather than a reliance on special education teachers providing the intervention or targeted instruction in the general education setting (Agran et al., 2020). There is also a continued need for ongoing professional development to improve attitudes about inclusion (Roberts et al., 2018) and support educators' agentive actions related to supporting learners with ESN (Miller et al., 2020). This study aims to attend to these gaps by exploring the pedagogical approaches used to support students with ESN leveraged by a district committed to inclusion.

District Scaling Efforts

Current research indicates strong, inspirational leadership to be a very important factor in the development of inclusive schools (Shogren et al., 2015); however, less is known regarding

how inclusive leaders are flexible and creative with their resources to support inclusive schools. The proposed research may contribute to the research in that area. Additionally, research is needed on district and state roles on inclusive mission and visioning to support widespread implementation and sustainability (Shogren et al., 2015). For schools and districts to take on this level of scaling work, it is important to inquire with whom, under what conditions, and over what periods of time previous schools and districts have engaged and what their outcomes are related to district wide inclusive scaling (Agran et al., 2020). Finally, Roberts et al., (2018) states the importance of ongoing professional development for administrators and school leaders to improve ideology around inclusion as well as specific knowledge on how to support instruction for students with ESN.

Conclusion

Inclusive education provides an undeniable framework in which society can learn, grow, and achieve great things together (Giangreco, 2020). This review of the literature on inclusion, inclusive practices, and barriers to widespread inclusive reform suggests that through the use of research-based inclusive practices, and creative and collaborative problem-solving, schools may be able to meet and uphold expectations for quality instruction for all learners, as well as ensure that students' educational and civil rights are being met (Giangreco, 2020).

Overall, findings from the extant research highlight how inclusive ideology plays an important role in how educators use their agency to make improvements in their own classroom in addition to influencing greater systems change efforts on a larger scale (Miller et al, 2020; Pedaste et al., 2021). Additionally, many schools interested in inclusionary practices work should not just start with the inclusion of students with high incidence or mild disabilities but rather work to include students with ESN from the beginning. Establishing strong cultures of

belonging, commitments to collaboration, and the use of evidence-based inclusionary practices to support student engagement may provide the organizational structure needed for leadership to create sustainability in inclusive reform (Roberts et al., 2018; Shogren et al., 2015). For inclusive education to achieve widespread implementation, it will require a deep cultural transformation (Baglieri et al., 2011b).

Chapter 3: Methods

Theoretical Framing and Background

In designing methodology for this research study, my conceptual and theoretical frameworks center my commitment to meaningful and authentic inclusive education. My conceptual framework includes the theoretical frameworks of disability studies in education (DSE) (Baglieri et al., 2011) and critical inclusive education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). These two frameworks support my process of inquiry and exploration of the dynamics that exist in and across each domain as well as how they are reflected in my personal conceptual framework and subsequent research questions.

Disability Studies in Education (DSE)

The theoretical framework of Disability Studies in Education (DSE) supports the exploration of the limitations and tensions around inclusion and inclusionary practices to ground, reframe, and define research and practice (Baglieri et al., 2011). DSE's socio-historic lens considers, and frames beliefs, attitudes, structures and systems related to disability that either enable or disable people within society's institutions (Connor et al., 2020). My framework draws heavily from DSE tenets three and four. Specifically, tenet three emphasizes the importance of promoting social justice, equitable and inclusive educational opportunities, and full meaningful access to all aspects of society for individuals with disabilities (Valle & Connor, 2019). DSE tenet four stresses the importance of assuming competence and rejecting deficit models of disability (Valle & Connor, 2019). These tenets are vital to my framework as they draw attention to the importance of social justice, equitable and inclusive educational opportunities, and full meaningful access to all aspects of society for people labeled with disability/disabled people as well as assuming competence and rejecting deficit models of disability (Connor et al., 2020).

Additionally, the framework of DSE is important to this study as it evokes thought processes and framing that my traditional special education teacher training/background lacks. For example, the DSE framework places emphasis on how people with disabilities are understood, regarding power, value, oppression, and inclusion, whereas the thought process of special educators tends to be more ideological free from practical concerns (Connor, 2014). Meaning, traditional special education is often more concerned with navigating the legal requirements of an IEP and is often detached from understanding the lived experience of an individual with disabilities. The DSE ideology of understanding the whole person/student frames not only my research questions, but the specific questions I plan on asking participants to explore and reflect upon. It is with both the special educator and DSE lens that I try to frame this work by focusing on school leader dispositions as well as practical application of their ideas in educational settings (Connor, 2014). Furthermore, while this study is focused on inclusive education, DSE framing supports inquiry around creating and sustaining inclusive schools (Connor et al., 2009) to support systems change efforts at the district level.

Finally, the DSE framework supports my questions about who inclusionary leaders in the district are, how inclusionary practice leaders make sense of and define inclusionary practices, who benefits from specific inclusionary practices, and how teams make sense of the importance of scale and sustainability of inclusive systems. Most importantly, this framework views inclusion from an ideological stance and acknowledges, “that understandings of disability occur through human expectations and interactions in social contexts” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 275). This consideration and emphasis on social connections is how we grow as a community into a greater shared definition of what it means to be inclusive, and more specifically, how inclusive settings support all students and build towards larger scaling efforts. For educators like myself,

DSE provides the motivation and hope to continue to strive to educate children with diverse abilities (Connor, 2014).

Critical Inclusion

The theoretical framework of critical inclusion seeks to examine current thinking about inclusion as a social justice initiative (Artiles et al., 2006). Critical inclusion looks at how inclusive education principles and practices seek to achieve social justice for students with disabilities (Artiles et al., 2006). This social justice work is needed to transform and move away from individual and societal acceptance of ability-based segregation, towards a more holistic worldview that sees all individuals for their strengths and not solely for their growth or deficit areas. To engage in this transformative work, systems of power must be examined to understand why and for whom decisions benefit. As such, the systems and the individuals in decision making roles need to identify the imbalances in power to best support equitable decision making.

Critical inclusion expands conversations and implementation of inclusive education beyond disability, to all learners, including those who have been historically marginalized based on other identity markers such as race and language (Annamma et al., 2013). A focus on the cultural history and patterns in which society treats difference helps lead to greater understanding and action around the ways in which race and disability help to shift positions of power (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). When educators focus on understanding the whole individual, acknowledging their multiple social identities and experiences, and provide a curriculum that is meaningful and accessible, students are provided with more opportunities to increase access, participation, and outcomes for all (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

Both the frameworks of disability studies in education (DSE) and critical inclusion highlight the connectedness regarding individual ideologies around inclusion, how inclusive practices are implemented, and who benefits from those decisions. Students with extensive support needs (ESN) continue to be removed from their general education classrooms on the basis that they are not able to access instruction based upon preconceived ideological notions despite decades of positive research (Agran et al., 2020). The frameworks of DSE and critical inclusion support critical inquiry with the intent of dismantling the oppressive and ableist perceptions that continue to determine which students should be included while others are not. This study frames inclusion as a moral imperative, while also seeking to examine inclusive practices with a critical lens to transform classrooms, schools, and districts (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). While educators continue their ideological journeys, “there is no disagreement in education about whether people with disabilities should be afforded full equality” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 276), thus this study seeks to better understand why the educational system continues to leave students with ESN behind and for whom those decisions benefit.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand how inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education understand and implement inclusionary practices in their contexts with a specific focus on learners with extensive support needs (ESN). Additionally, this study sought to understand the visioning process inclusionary practice leaders engage in as they make decisions related to scaling and sustaining inclusive education in their schools across the district. This study focused specifically on one district who is actively engaged in inclusive practices work and includes learners with ESN in their mission and visioning. This study explored the following research questions:

1. How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
2. How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality Statement

My interest in working with inclusive practices leaders stems from the work I have been engaged with over 5 plus years as part of a technical assistance project grant that was created to showcase schools and districts adopting and implementing inclusive practices over specific periods of time. In visiting the school sites selected as models of inclusive education, visitors are provided with a learning experience designed to support the vision and development process to bring inclusionary practices into their own contexts. The impetus for this research proposal originated from my work on this technical assistance project. As I engaged in this work and supported these school visits, I wondered how inclusionary practice leaders were defining inclusion, if there were specific populations being left out of their definitions, how successes and failures were defined, what the catalysts for change were in their contexts, how people made sense of what goal areas to target, and what their considerations were for sustainability and scale, if any. These questions provided some grounding and led me to want to understand how leaders across the district are involved in the work, what inclusionary practices are prioritized, how individuals with ESN and their families are part of the decision-making process, and what the larger district systems are doing to plan for scale and sustainability.

In addition to being drawn to this work because of my role on this project, I am invested in this type of work because of my family's own experience with navigating the educational

system and our advocacy for inclusive education. I am a proud sister of a brother with Down syndrome. While I have been formally part of the field of special education for just over ten years, working in both inclusive and segregated settings supporting students and families from birth to age 22, my work began long before that as a sister. It was with the birth of my brother many years ago where I first began to question our society's ableist assumptions about ability as I noticed what spaces my brother was allowed to be present. Segregation based on ability did not make sense to me at an early age and I could not understand why my brother was not allowed to attend elementary school with me and had to go to a different "special school." I recognize that my positionality is heavily rooted in my own lived experiences that my brother and our family lived through during his public-school years. These are only some of the ways in which I have developed a strong personal bias in favor of inclusivity. As such, I am conscious of the fact that my personal bias may have shaped my analysis and subsequent interpretations of the data (Miles et al., 2020). As such I have made an intentional effort to engage in consistent opportunities for reflection and transparency as I engaged in processes that allowed me to check for representativeness, researcher effects, triangulation across data and methods, as well as weighing the evidence (Miles et al., 2020).

Finally, I recognize a third side of my positionality, which is that I am working with school sites and with individuals whom I have developed relationships with through my work on the technical assistance grant. As such, I recognize that power dynamics could shift in my favor (Ishimaru, 2019). For example, participants may have felt pressured in individual or whole group sessions to engage and may not have felt comfortable speaking their mind due to my relationships with school or district administration given we are all very passionate about inclusive education. Due to my strong commitments to inclusive education, I attempted to

maintain transparency regarding the biases I brought to the data collection and analysis phases. This included using analytic memos and member checks throughout the process and reflecting opening regarding how bias shaped my design, analysis, and interpretation of the findings (Brantlinger, et al., 2005; Miles et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Qualitative Inquiry

I used qualitative research methods with this study because I am interested in how people make sense of their lived experiences. In other words, I aimed to understand how someone experiences a specific phenomena (inclusive education) and how they attribute meaning to those experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017). In leveraging this methodology, I used a systematic approach to understand specific qualities of this phenomenon within a particular context, the focal district (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). As the primary instrument in the setting, I engaged throughout all steps of the inquiry process, district and participant selection to data collection methods and analysis, in an attempt to make something formerly invisible (i.e., the processes by which leaders conceptualize and plan for inclusive education for learners with ESN), visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, I sought to study individuals in their natural settings to interpret and make sense of specific phenomena, and the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The characteristics of meaning making and understanding, researcher as primary instrument, inductive process, and rich description are all supportive of my decision to use qualitative methodology for this study and are described in further detail in the subsequent section.

Firstly, qualitative inquiry centers on the importance of meaning as a method of understanding. This requires the researcher to describe the experiences individuals go through to understand the process of the meaning making rather than focusing on the outcome or product

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By not attempting to predict the ending outcome or product, the effort to understand remains the goal. Patton (1985) emphasizes the importance of understanding context as the best way to understand the importance of a particular setting, how people view that setting, why that setting is meaningful to them, and how particular experiences have shaped how they view the world. In this tradition, the researcher focuses on the words and artifacts that the participants use to describe their world based on their individual cultural values and beliefs rather than the interpretation of a researcher.

By leveraging qualitative methodology, it was my desire to cultivate meaning and understanding while engaging and learning from my participants. To cultivate meaning and understand myself as the research instrument, I responded and adapted to different types of data that were collected along the way (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). The data collected took multiple forms, as I prioritized anything the participant found valuable in the telling of their journeys. While I leveraged my design plan for data collection throughout, I also remained fluid to be responsive to additional opportunities for data collection brought forward by participants.

When an individual approaches the work of data collection and analysis, as is often the case in qualitative research, one must be aware of their own personal positions, perspectives, and values to be transparent as to how those shape the research process and subsequent findings (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). This means that while I engaged in research as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, I acknowledge that I am not free from bias. I tried to hide these orientations and perspectives but identified them and monitored them throughout to make clear how they may have been shaping the collection and interpretation of the data (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). I have the duty to be transparent about my own beliefs, values, and assumptions so that I am best able to understand and reflect on how they are informing my work (Bhattacharya, 2017).

In studying inclusionary practices leaders, I acknowledge that my subjectivity cannot be completely controlled. The frameworks of critical inclusion and DSE have been leveraged to support this moral grounding (Brantlinger, et al., 2005) as they provide the framework to support critical inquiry around inclusion and inclusive practices to transform classrooms, schools, and districts (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004) for all students, but especially for those with ESN.

A third reason I have leveraged qualitative methodology with this research is because there is a lack of information or theory to explain why some schools are engaging in inclusive practices work and others are not (Gee et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a lack of research around those who are engaged in inclusive practices work that continues to exclude individuals with ESN (Agran et al., 2020; Kurth et al., 2015). While I can form my own hypothesis from my own experiences as to why this barrier remains, I used an inductive process whereby data was gathered to build evidence-based claims about this phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The inductive process better addressed my research questions and supported my ability to build and generalize theory from the observations, interviews, and other artifacts gathered from participants. However, towards the end of the data collection phase I also leveraged deductive coding as I drew connections from the theoretical frameworks that are shaping my inquiry and research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The final identified benefit of leveraging qualitative research for this study is that qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive (Bhattacharya, 2017). This means that all my data collection included descriptive elements that painted a clear picture of the participants and their understandings of inclusive education for students with ESN throughout the process. Furthermore, in using qualitative inquiry I was able to draw from any number of artifacts throughout the data collection process. As such, I collected data from a combination of

observations, individual interviews, focus group interviews, applications, webinars, student work, educator lesson plans, planning meetings, internal documents, and more. This open-ended way of collecting data supported being present with the participants as they found and presented artifacts/materials that they attributed meaning to rather than the data collection being limited to something specific or singular.

Methodological Approach

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe how a basic qualitative approach seeks to answer, “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (p. 24).” Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) qualitative questions align with my purpose and research questions as I sought to understand how inclusive practice leaders describe and make sense of their inclusionary practice journeys, with a specific focus on learners with ESN. While this basic qualitative research methodological approach encompasses much of what I have studied, which is to uncover and interpret meanings, the additional dimension of using a qualitative case study has supported my inquiry into an in depth analysis of a real life context (Yin, 2014), which in the case of this study is a district already actively engaged in and committed to inclusive education.

Qualitative Case Study Research

For the purposes of this work, I describe case study as, “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2018, p. 15). The decision to use case study relates to my desire and interest in gaining an in-depth understanding of the work inclusionary practices leaders do in their schools to provide meaningful and authentic experiences for all students, including students with ESN. Using case

study design, I have deepened my understanding to inform future professionals in their practice, but also to aid in policy development and community action in support of inclusive education (Bloomberg, 2018). To deepen understanding, my case study analysis involved in-depth descriptions and analysis where the phenomenon (i.e., district wide implementation of inclusive education) exists within a set of parameters or boundaries (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). This definition highlights the importance of selecting a case or group of participants of whom are actively engaged in transformative change within their contexts. Furthermore, definitions call for bounded systems that are explored over a period that collect multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and reports (Creswell, 2013). Both definitions helped to shape my inquiry.

First, I established a clear understanding around what the boundaries of my case consisted of to determine what would and would not be studied. One definition I found particularly helpful was presented by Miles et al. (2014), who describes an image of a heart in the center of a circle to describe case study as a phenomenon that occurs in a bounded context (p. 25). The description of the heart within the circle indicates that the heart is the focus of study with the circle around it being the defined edges that creates the bounded case of. What occurs within the circle is the case and will be part of the study and anything outside of the circle will not be studied. Keeping this in mind, I situated inclusionary practices leaders to be the “heart” and focus of my study. This group of selected leaders consisted of 9 individuals. Participants were all from one focal school district to ensure the study remained bound to the specific identified leaders in their context. I was particularly interested in engaging with one singular school district to study and reflect on their growth over a period of time. Specifically, I used an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) to focus my inquiry on a district that was already

committed to inclusive education. Thus, I chose a group of people (inclusionary practices leaders), a specific issue (inclusive education), and place (focal school district), which created a bounded system of study (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Instrumental Case Study

Implementing an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) with a focal district who is currently engaged in inclusive practices work, the instrumental case study supported the goal to provide insight into a specific issue, specifically the issue of continued exclusion of students with ESN and the district's commitment to disrupting that pattern through inclusive education. I used an instrumental case study because I believe this research could have a significant contribution to the knowledge base and will hopefully serve to inform future work (Yin, 2018). The social phenomena of interest is how inclusionary practices leaders engage and focus on inclusive education within their district, with a specific focus on how the work supports learners with ESN. While many schools and districts might be engaged in inclusive practices development work, often students with ESN are left out of the conversations and do not directly benefit from inclusionary practices being implemented. The rationale for engaging in this work using an instrumental case study, is that the focal district represented an "extreme or unusual case" that is connected to many people, beyond those with ESN (Yin, 2018). In other words, the case (school district) was of secondary interest, but it played an important role in facilitating understanding around the inclusion of individuals with ESN (Stake, 1995).

While this instrumental case study was bounded to one school district engaging in inclusive practice development and implementation district wide, the ability to interview individual participants from varying school sites within the district and in various roles supported the analysis of the similarities and differences that occurred between multiple participants

working within the bounded context (Bhattacharya, 2017). Working with different participants in different schools and in different roles in the school district supported the credibility and trustworthiness of the study as there is greater ability for richer interpretation of the data (Brantlinger, et al., 2005; Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, a richer data set from multiple people with different perspectives, working at different sites across the focal district led to greater variation in the data which also strengthened credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Setting and Participants

The focal district and participants were selected using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involves selecting an information rich case to be studied in depth. Sampling with purpose ensured that only the district and participants from whom I felt I could learn a great deal from were selected. For this study, I utilized criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) which involved reviewing potential focal districts and educational leaders within those districts and identifying those who met a predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002).

Focal District Inclusion Criteria

To select the participating district that served as the case of study, I considered the following criteria: (a) district has an outward facing mission, vision, or promise statement with commitments to equity; (b) district leadership is committed to the alignment and implementation of inclusion across every school in the district; (c) schools within the district have internal or outward facing mission and vision statements with a commitment to equity; (d) evidence of implementation of various inclusionary practices across all school sites in the district; and (e) students with extensive support needs are part of the district's inclusive practices work. Districts of interest, specifically contacts in the special education or special services department, were

contacted via email (see Appendix A for district recruitment invitation) to introduce myself and gauge interest in being part of the study. Those interested were asked to provide information based on the above inclusion criteria to determine district selection (see Appendix B for district inclusion criteria screener). School districts that did not meet the above criteria were excluded from the study.

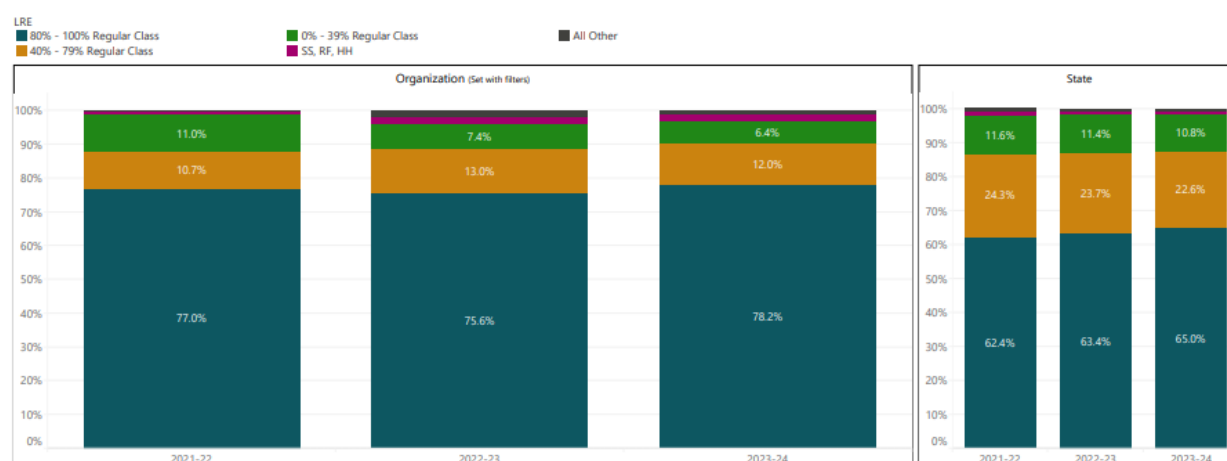
One district met the inclusion criteria and became the focal district for the study, Mount Rocket School District (MRSD). This district is in a rural area of Washington State and is made up of five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The district also included one alternative high school co-located on the main high school campus and one early learning center site. Data pulled from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) report card indicates enrollment in MRSD for the 2024-2025 school year to be just below 6,000 students. Approximately 38% of students/families were reported as low income, approximately 15% of students were reported to be English Language Learners, and approximately 14% of students in the district were identified with disabilities. This district was chosen for its commitment to inclusive education at the district level. At the time of the study, each school site in the district was at a different phase of their journey with inclusive reform with some schools having worked on inclusive practices for upwards of 10 years, while others had only recently started to implement specific practices.

Figure 1 below shows the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Data for MRSD from the 2021 school year to the end of the 2024 school year. When comparing this data to past years the focal district had been working to move the needle towards more inclusive educational opportunities for all students, but also for students with ESN who are most often educated/placed in the LRE 3 (0-39% time spent in general education) category. In 2021, 11.0% of students

accessed the general education setting 0-39% of the time compared to 6.4% of students by the end of 2024. This shows the growth and efforts of MRSD to increase the time students with ESN spend in general education. Of additional note, the right side of the image indicates the LRE averages for the state which show MRSD as being below the state averages in all three tiers of LRE. Most notably, at the time of the study in MRSD, 6.4% of students with ESN were educated in the LRE 3 category in 2024 compared to the state average of 10.8%.

Figure 1

Least Restrictive Environment Percentages for MRSD Compared to the State



Note. The graphic shows the percentages of students with disabilities and how often they are part of the general education or regular class. This figure was created from data provided by participant from Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) regarding LRE.

Educational Leaders Inclusion Criteria

Once the focal district/case was selected district leaders were asked to provide recommendations regarding people in their district who were actively engaged in inclusive practices work and were seen as inclusionary practice leaders. This request was communicated in the initial district recruitment letter (Appendix A). The list of potential participant names and

emails were provided via email. Recommendations included individuals from different schools and were not limited to administrators (e.g., district office personnel, principals, assistant principals) although many administrators were indicated as inclusionary practice leaders. This study defined inclusionary practices leaders as those in traditional leadership roles (e.g., district administrators, school administrators) as well as general education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, paraeducators, and family members. This included any individual who has a passion for equity and was engaged in school/district reform efforts.

Each of the recommended inclusionary practices leaders received a research study recruitment invitation (see Appendix C for participant recruitment invitation). Those interested were asked to participate in a 30-minute screening meeting to inform final participant selection (see Appendix D for participant inclusion criteria screener). Nine participants were selected out of eighteen interested participants each with a different role and at different levels of the system (i.e., elementary, middle, high, and district office; see Table 1). Individual participants were excluded from the study for a) not including individuals with ESN in their commitments to equity during the initial selection interview; b) if they were not currently involved in directly working with students with ESN or were not working to support the needs of students with ESN in other capacities; and c) if they had a history of frequent absences at work that would have made scheduling difficult, or were scheduled to be out on personal leave. All participants were asked to fill out a participant consent form (see Appendix E for participant consent form). Table 1 below displays each participant indicating their individually selected pseudonym and their self-reported gender, pronouns, ethnicity, age, ages they served/taught, and their primary and/secondary role(s) in the district.

Table 1*Individual Participant Information*

Pseudonym	Gender / Pronouns	Ethnicity	Age	Years in Education	Grades Served	Role(s) / Credential
Luna	Woman	White	30s	5-10 yrs in district/overall	6 - 12 / District wide	SLP / AAC Specialist
Neil	Man	White	40s	25-30 yrs in district/overall	9 - 12 grade	Principal / General Education Credential & Admin Credential
Cleo	Woman	White	50s	<5 yrs in district/overall	10th grade / 6 - 8 grade	Parent to student with ESN / Paraeducator
Steve	Man	White	40s	5-10 yrs in district/ 20-25 yrs overall	6 - 8 grade	Principal / Special Education Credential & Admin Credential
Carla	Woman	Mixed Race	30s	5-10 yrs in district/overall	6th grade	Special Education Teacher / Credential
Bader	Woman	White	40s	<5 yrs in district/ 10-15 yrs overall	6th & 8th grade	General Education Teacher / Credential
Molly	Woman	White	40s	20-25 yrs in district/overall	Transitional Kindergarten	General Education Teacher / Credential
Marie	Woman	White	50s	<5 yrs in district / 20-25 yrs overall	District office	District Administrator / Special Education Credential & Superintendent Certification
Dosie	Man	White	50s	<5 yrs in the district/ 33 years overall	District office	District Administrator / General Education Credential & Superintendent Certification

Note. Some participants held multiple roles and multiple credentials/certifications. Not all

individuals reported their multiple roles and credentials, nor were all credentials/certifications used in their current role at the time data collection took place.

Luna. Luna is a speech and language pathologist (SLP) who was in her 9th year working in the district as well as in education overall. Prior to working in the school system Luna worked as a reading specialist at Lindamood-Bell. Luna provides speech and language services to students grades 6-12, including those with ESN. Luna provides services through a person-centered flexible service delivery model that provides students the opportunity for pull out, push

in, or consultation related to their goal areas. Luna is very passionate about student and family voice and choice in creating rigorous learning goals as well as creating environments that will provide each student the support to meet those rigorous learning goals. In addition to her role as SLP, Luna also serves as the district Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specialist. This role was created by district leaders to support learners with ESN who use AAC devices as well as to provide support to the students' school and home-based teams. This means Luna provides coaching, professional development, and technical assistance supporting the use of AAC devices both at school and at home. Luna is provided with release time to provide technical assistance/programming of devices as well as to manage and support student communication plans and provide communication coaching to families and staff. Luna has a strong commitment and passion for supporting meaningful inclusion of individuals with ESN across all domains as well as her passion and connection to family and community partnerships.

Neil. Neil holds a general education credential and administrative credential. He was currently in his 26th year in the district as well as in education overall. Neil started his career teaching English Language Arts and Social Studies at the middle school level and then moved to teaching history at the high school level. Neil has served his district widely as a general education teacher, athletic coach, high school athletic director, middle school principal, and was currently in his 5th year as principal of the local district high school. Neil holds strong commitments to ending exclusionary practices in his building as well as districtwide. Neil's commitments center on fostering collaborative learning communities that are clear on the development and implementation of standards-based instruction that is rigorous, accessible, and prepares all students for their postsecondary journeys. He believes in distributive leadership and works tirelessly to ensure that all members of the high school have the knowledge and tools to

sustain the work. In addition to sustainability, Neil has been an outspoken advocate for scaling commitments to inclusionary principles and practices district wide and supporting vertical alignment as students travel along their K-12 journey.

Cleo. Cleo works as a paraeducator in one of two middle schools in the district. She has been in her current position for the past 3 years working as a 1:1 aide for students with ESN. Cleo is also the mother of an exceptional young woman who is in the 10th grade at the local district high school. Cleo has experience with Montessori instructional methods which were supportive of the early learning and instruction with her daughter who has Down syndrome. Cleo is passionate about inclusive education which stems from her and her husband's journey navigating the educational system with her daughter. Cleo believes in strong collaboration between school and family partnerships to support a more holistic and person-centered approach to education. In her role as a paraeducator Cleo has found passion in curriculum accommodations and modifications for students with ESN to meaningfully include students with ESN in grade level academic classes. She has been a leader supporting curriculum accommodations and modifications that also provide students with ESN more opportunities to work on specific IEP goals such as in communication. Her advocacy has provided students with more opportunities to work on skills in their naturally occurring contexts with peers of the same age.

Steve. Steve holds a special education credential as well as an administrative credential. He was currently in his 20th year of education. Steve started his educational career as a special education teacher where he taught and case managed students with emotional and behavioral needs. After 14 years as a special education teacher, Steve arrived in the focal district and served as assistant principal at one of the two middle schools in the district alongside previously

mentioned participant, Neil. Steve was currently in his 5th year as principal of the same middle school. Steve's commitments center on creating welcoming and inclusive experiences for all students. Additionally, Steve supports the work of building and sustaining collaborative cultures to ensure that teams develop full instructional cycles each term that provide targeted intervention for all students and include proactive planning strategies using the UDL framework and Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) practices. At the time of the study, Steve was focusing on ensuring that lessons are inclusive and accessible to students with ESN in grade level academic content areas. Steve is committed to a "learning by doing mindset", creating opportunities for his classified and certified to collaborate and come together to workshop and implement research-based practices into daily practice to serve all students.

Carla. Carla holds a special education credential. She began her educational journey as a substitute in the focal district's special education classrooms eventually taking a permanent position at one of the two middle schools in the focal district. Carla manages a mixed caseload of students in the 6th grade which includes a range of students with various disabilities including students with ESN. She co-teaches 6th grade math as well as 6th grade ELA and history. She is one of three case managers at her middle school each of whom manage a mixed caseload of students as well as co-teach the ELA and math classes in an assigned grade level (e.g., 6th, 7th, or 8th). The culture of the school, led by previously mentioned participant Steve, is one that is highly collaborative. As such Carla is provided with weekly time to co-plan with her co-teacher colleagues around curriculum as well as instructional strategies to support individuals with and without specialized planning (i.e., IEPs or 504 plans). Carla is involved with various school activities and clubs where she is an active leader in challenging long standing white centric ideologies in education in favor of more inclusive and diverse ways of being. Additionally, she is

driven by a passion to support learners with ESN as well as being an advocate for creating communities of belonging as well as her commitment to and partnership with families.

Bader. Bader has been teaching for 15 years and was currently in her 4th year in the focal district where she is part of the middle school team with Cleo, Steve, and Carla. Bader has a long history with inclusive education thanks to an instrumental leader in her first teaching position in a neighboring district who was a strong leader and advocate for students with ESN. This teaching placement was transformational for Bader as she grew her knowledge base around how to meaningfully support students with a variety of needs. After taking some time off to raise her children, Bader returned to teaching in another district, however she did not find the collaborative culture she had previously experienced and realized the desire to find a community of educators that held her same commitments to collaboration to support all learners. She landed in her current position in the focal district as a 6th grade ELA/social studies teacher as well as 8th grade science teacher. She co-teaches 6th grade ELA/social studies with Carla. While Bader continues her commitments to collaboration with her colleagues, she has been an instrumental team member supporting students with ESN broadly as well as modeling how to incorporate student communication device goals within grade level academic curriculum. Her work to create cultures of belonging in her classroom has advanced the school's overall belonging goals, but she has also created and implemented systems and structures to support understanding and fluency around planning for students with ESN. This planning has been supportive of both horizontal and vertical alignment of practices and commitments in her respective content areas as well as within the school community.

Molly. Molly holds a general education credential. This was her 21st year in education having taught transitional kindergarten (TK) through third grade. Most of her educational

journey was spent teaching Kindergarten and 1st grade. She has since transitioned to teaching TK and has taught all 21 years of her educational career at the same elementary school in the district. Molly is also a graduate of the focal school district high school. In addition to her TK position, the district has provided her with release time to support her fellow TK colleagues across the district in a coaching capacity. This role has supported greater alignment amongst the TK classes across the district, as well as assisting in furthering collaboration in the TK professional learning community (PLC) as the team works together to unit plan and design lessons that are supportive of diverse groups of learners (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, and students with ESN). Molly's lived experiences in her professional and personal life have shaped her understanding and passion for equity and inclusion of all students. Molly's understanding of how bias shows up in spaces is evident in her commitment to ongoing reflection. This time spent on reflection in her own classroom and with her colleagues ensures that she is creating classroom communities that provide all individuals with the time and space to cultivate and experience authentic belonging for all cultures, abilities, and more.

Marie. Marie has been in education for 25 years. Marie started her educational journey as a 1:1 paraeducator. After a year she was hired into a role supporting the training and programming of individuals with Autism and other behavioral support needs. In this role Marie worked closely with classroom teachers to implement specific intervention plans which eventually led to Marie accepting a classroom teacher position. Following her time as an interventionist Marie transitioned to an administrative position supporting self-contained programs including preschool and transition services. Most recently, Marie has worked in the focal district for the last 4 years as a director of student services. Marie holds her special education credential, administrative credential, and superintendent certification. Marie is deeply

committed to practices that support greater understanding around ending inequity, racism, and ableism and creating allyship in the work. Her goals include scaling her inclusive commitments across the system and modeling inclusion at the district level. She has supported the cross collaboration between departments to plan and deliver professional development across the district as well as worked to create a preschool option for the community that is fully inclusive. Marie's collaboration includes supporting preschool teams, working with the SLP providers (which included the creation of an AAC lead position held by participant Luna), and working with high school teams to support student centered approaches to transition plans that are reflective of each student's goals and aspirations. Marie approaches every conversation with a lens that seeks to further the need for transformational change in her school community and beyond.

Dosie. The final participant of this study, Dosie, served as a high-ranking general education district administrator in his 2nd year with the focal district. Dosie has been in education for 33 years, holding his general education teaching credential, administrative credential, and superintendent certification. He started his educational career teaching in elementary and middle schools before entering his administrative journey as an elementary principal and then as a district level administrator. Dosie upholds an appreciative mindset that celebrates and uses strengths to support growth areas. His commitments center on fostering communities of belonging where everyone can be their authentic selves and achieve at high levels. He works to celebrate individuality which includes inviting community members to the table to continue to expand the often limited or narrow perspective of schools and districts. His work around building authentic connections with the community has supported greater collaboration amongst educators and contributed to clarity around how to support all students

learning and achieving academic and personal goals. Dosie has been instrumental in aligning his goals with best practice research to support the creation of shared definitions of inclusion followed by capacity building strategies that continue to build positive momentum around scaling and sustainability of inclusionary principles and practices.

All participants held a variety of personal and professional experiences that shaped their values, commitments, and goals in education. Each participant carried a different lens that was shaped by their personal and professional journeys over the years. This lens, alongside their individual strengths, supported in their work as inclusive leaders. The following section discusses data collection methods, timeline, and scope of data.

Data Sources

Data sources were a mix of tangible and intangible sources of information (Bhattacharya, 2017). Tangible data collection sources came from interviews, documents, questionnaires, surveys, individual and group interviews, student work, and district artifacts (Dooley, 2022). Intangible data collection sources came from participant description of memories, inspirations, insights, etc. as gathered during interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017). Implementing multiple methods of data collection supported stronger trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Figure 2 provides a visual image of the activities (e.g., individual interviews, observations, focus group interview, and artifact generation) participants engaged in as well as brief descriptions of each of the four methods of data generation.

Figure 2*Data Collection Activities*

Note. This figure denotes the four data collection activities leveraged in this research.

In addition, Table 2 provides the scope of data that was generated for each participant, including when a participant was unable to engage in a specific type of data generation.

Table 2*Activity Participation Matrix*

Pseudonym	Luna	Neil	Cleo	Steve	Carla	Bader	Molly	Marie	Dosie
Interview 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Observation 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Observation 2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	n/a
Interview 2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Focus Group Interview	x	n/a	x	x	n/a	x	x	x	n/a
Artifact Generation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Note. N/a indicates when a type of data collected was not available.

Figure 3 provides a visual timeline of the various activities I engaged in before data collection (e.g., submission to IRB, district/participant selection) and during the data collection process (e.g., interviews, observations, artifact collection). Analysis of the data occurred throughout all data generation activities. Figure 3 also displays when participants were engaged in specific data generation activities over the course of the data collection phases.

Figure 3

Data Collection Timeline



Note. This image shows when the start of each data collection phase occurred. Artifacts were generated and collected throughout this timeline.

Interview Data Collection

Participants were asked to participate in two individual interviews. Individual interviews took place at the beginning and towards the end of the data collection time frame. Interviews were designed to be no more than 60 minutes each (range 38-69 minutes) and included a list of predetermined questions (see Appendix F for individual Interview 1 questions) modeled after Patton's (2015) six types of questions: experience and behavior questions, opinion and values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions. The interview questions aligned to my theoretical and conceptual frameworks as I aimed to critically engage with the tensions in special education to ground and reframe how individuals and larger inclusionary practice teams define their own

practice (Baglieri et al., 2011a). The purpose of holding individual interviews was to understand in greater detail how an individual engages with inclusionary practices, why they have chosen to take up the work, and how individuals with ESN are reflected in their descriptions and implementation.

Individual interviews included questions that connected to the frameworks of critical inclusion, DSE, and appreciative inquiry. Specifically, leveraging the framework of critical inclusion, interview questions sought to define the core issues of the cultural-historical side of inclusive education, the nature of community and participation, and the need for a transformative agenda (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Leveraging the DSE framework I wanted to understand how leaders were thinking about students and how their thinking showed up in their school cultures. Finally, appreciative inquiry's five stages or cycles called the 5-D process (i.e., *Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny*) was leveraged to guide participants towards highlighting strengths as well as specific moments or practices that were going well to support future dreaming and designing (Cooperider et al., 2008). Thus, interview questions were designed to: frame inclusion as a social justice initiative (Artiles et al., 2006), the need for denormalization (Baglieri et al., 2011b), the importance of intersectionality (Waitoller, 2020), and appreciation of positive forward progress in a system (Cooperider et al., 2008).

Additionally, individual interviews were a combination of both semi-structured and unstructured/informal styles to ensure that all pertinent information was obtained (Bhattacharya, 2017). When meeting with individuals in a one-on-one setting I utilized a more semi-structured approach as there were specific questions I wanted participants to engage with, but I also wanted them to feel comfortable to take the conversation in whatever direction they desired. Many participants expressed appreciation for the flexibility in how they participated in the interview

process. I provided questions ahead of time so that participants had the opportunity to think and reflect about their responses if they so desired. However, I communicated that interview preparation was not required.

The second round of individual interviews were designed to be no more than 60 minutes each (range 31-69 minutes) (see Appendix G - P for individual Interview 2 questions) occurred for most participants following the two participant observations. For some participants, Interview 2 occurred after the focus group interview (focus group interview discussed in upcoming section). These interview questions followed all the previously mentioned procedures and were structured similarly for each participant but were also highly individualized to allow participants to describe in detail some of the thinking and intentionality behind the two required observations (observations to be discussed in a following section) that preceded the interview. The questions in individual Interview 2 also provided me with the opportunity to re-ask some questions from the first interview including more specific or clarifying questions about practices to support students with ESN as well as questions about scale and sustainability to ensure clarity around the study research questions.

Focus Group Interviews

In addition to individual interviews, one focus group interview was held where inclusionary practices leader participants came together and engaged as a group. The purpose of the focus group was to create an opportunity for participants to come together and engage to learn about the work each other were engaged in to support district organizational reform (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Questions were designed to generate hope, excitement, and renewed investment (Bushe, 2011). Each participant brought forward inclusionary practices occurring in their contexts which supported their engagement in the group discussion (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2016). Focus group interview questions (see Appendix P for focus group questions) used an appreciative lens to position school teams as action researchers rather than fixers of students (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). The focus group interview was designed to be one 90-minute session (duration 77 minutes) in which the questions followed a more unstructured/informal style to be able to provide an interactive discussion that allowed participants the ability to share and potentially refine their views (Hennink, 2014). Overall, like the individual interviews, questions asked in the focus group interview focused on what was working well in the district to support system wide transformation supportive of the scaling and sustainability of inclusive practices to support learners with ESN.

Observations

I also engaged in systematic observations with participants as part of this research study. The goal of these observations was to collect information about human actions and behaviors related to inclusive education for students with ESN as they occurred in their real-life contexts, in the focal district (Dooley, 2002). Systematic observations were conducted in the setting where the phenomena naturally occur (i.e., classroom, conference room, district board room, etc.) to best represent a firsthand encounter rather than rely on secondhand statements collected during the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two observations were conducted per participant, with the exception of Dosie, who only engaged in one observation. Observations were scheduled based on relevance to the study. Observations included formal classroom instruction, curriculum planning meetings, school and district level planning meetings, and professional development opportunities. Table 3 showcases the type of observation that occurred per participant.

Table 3*Participant Observation Matrix*

Pseudonym	Observation 1	Observation 2
Luna	AAC Educational Benefit Review with SLP Colleagues	AAC Training for Student with ESN
Neil	Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices PD	Campus Tour Inclusionary Practices Showcase
Cleo	Support of student with ESN in co-taught ELA	Support of student with ESN in co-taught math
Steve	Dimensions of Belonging PD	Campus Tour Inclusionary Practices Showcase
Carla	Co-taught Math Instruction	Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting
Bader	Co-taught ELA Instruction	ELA Co-Planning Meeting
Molly	TK Instructional Centers	TK Instructional Choice Time
Marie	University Partner & District Collaboration Meeting	Inclusive IEP Book Study
Dosie	District Office Data Review Meeting	n/a

Note. N/a indicates when a type of data collection did not occur.

I took detailed fieldnotes during the observations. Fieldnotes focused on the research questions, problem statement, and theoretical frameworks; however, the focus remained flexible over the course of the study based on occurring events and observer interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The structure of the recorded field notes included a focus on the physical setting, the participants, activities/interactions, conversation, and my own behavior in the setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Observations occurred for the full time in which the event naturally occurred. For example, observations in the classroom lasted the entire class period (bell to bell) as well as

time spent before and after formal instruction to observe adult and student interactions. During each observation session I took field notes that included information about the context, descriptive and reflective notes about the event being observed, identification of specific inclusionary practices, any environmental observations (room arrangement, decor, etc.), and notes on clarifying questions to ask the participant (see Appendix Q for field note observation protocol).

Following each observation, I reviewed and cleaned up my field notes, generated clarifying questions to ask participants, and engaged in reflective memo-ing based on specific guiding questions related to my research questions. Reflective questions included (1) Are individuals with ESN present or discussed? (2) Were specific inclusionary practices chosen with students with ESN in mind? (3) Was there any evidence of scaling of inclusionary practices observed or discussed? And (4) Were individuals with ESN included in the conversations about scale? Additionally, to develop and sustain trustworthy relationships with participants as much as possible, I planned for my participation in observations to be secondary to my data collection role. This meant that I engaged in group conversations by adding suggestions to problems of practice when solicited or as I felt appropriate, but my primary focus was to accurately collect pertinent data.

Documents and Artifacts

In addition to gathering interview and observational data, I gathered data from multiple documents and artifacts for the purposes of providing more ways to attribute meaning to participant interviews. This involved collecting participant generated documents that provided insight into inclusive education and inclusive practices for students with ESN (see Appendix R for field note artifact protocol). Documents and artifacts ranged from written, visual, digital, and

physical materials I collected that participants and/or the setting indicated conveyed, represented, or carried meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The documents and artifacts collected were a combination of outward facing public records documents, and participant generated documents and artifacts. All documents and artifacts contributed to greater descriptive information, the verification and support of any current hypotheses based on my data analysis or the creation of new hypotheses, offered additional understanding of the district context, and provided an opportunity to track development of inclusionary practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the public records documents, I gathered information such as the district state Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data (Figure 1), student demographic data, data on student socioeconomic status, and more. This data helped with district selection, but it also helped to provide insight into the focal district and the students they served. In addition to public records data, I collected personal documents such as district mission and vision statements, inclusive building schedules, lesson plans, sample IEP goals, co-planning tools, and professional development materials. The collection of personal narrative documents supported and assisted in backing up the views and perspectives of individuals by showing what they felt was important through visual means (Saldaña, 2021). Collecting personal documents and artifacts supported my understanding of the inclusive practices journey that individuals, schools, and districts were on as identified by participants directly. Many of these documents also provided visual representations of ideas that participants shared in interviews and observations. All resources provided physical examples of how inclusive leaders were enacting the practices they described in interviews.

Finally, I also had the participants complete the *Principles and Practices to Build and Sustain Inclusive Schools* tool (Martin et al., 2023). This document was prepared by me to

generate more knowledge and understanding regarding the district, school, and individuals that support inclusive practices efforts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This artifact collection was optional for participants to engage with. The optional survey responses included on the tool highlighted the utility and effectiveness of specific inclusionary practices, included rating scales regarding how the school rated itself in overall inclusivity as well as in specific subcategories, and included inclusive practices growth plans. Drawing on these rich and diverse data sources gathered through a combination of interviews, observations, and documents supported greater triangulation of my findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Table 4 displays what tangible data sources were provided/collected. The table includes an artifact title, brief description, as well as who it was provided by. Collection of artifacts per participant ranged from multiple tangible data sources to no collected tangible data sources.

Table 4

Artifact Collection Matrix

Item	Title of Artifact	Description of Artifact	Provided By
1	Mission and Vision Statement	Photograph taken of the banner hanging in the school breezeway indicating the school mission and vision statement.	Neil
2	Core Values	Paper copy of the school's core values which align with the mission and vision statement and assist in guiding decision making.	Neil
3	Co-teach Blueprint	Paper copy of norms and questions designed to support the collaboration between co-teach partners.	Neil
4	Math Essential Standards	Access to an online spreadsheet where IEP goals have been aligned to the Common Core State Standards.	Neil
5	P&P Tool Data	Rating scale indicating what inclusionary principles and practices were in place, in progress, or not in place in the building as well as an action plan outlining inclusionary practice goals.	Neil
6	Mission and Vision Statement	Photograph taken of the banner hanging in the school breezeway indicating the school mission and vision statement.	Steve
7	Inclusive Practices Guidebook	This 20+ page packet provided to all school visitors looking to learn about inclusionary practices which includes many of the resources talked about on the tour.	Steve
8	P&P Tool Data	Rating scale indicating what inclusionary principles and practices were in place, in progress, or not in place in the building as well as an action plan outlining inclusionary practice goals.	Steve
9	Belonging Goals	Table of the belonging goals each department at EMS will be working on as well as the goals each school has established, they will be upholding.	Steve
10	Accommodated math test	Paper copy of an accommodated grade level math test created for students with ESN.	Carla

Item	Title of Artifact	Description of Artifact	Provided By
11	Inclusive IEP	Paper copy of a student with ESN's IEP which included strengths based present levels and goals tied to grade level standards.	Carla
12	Co-Planning Tool	Electronic copy of the co-planning tool used to support weekly planning for all students across all content areas.	Bader
13	Modified ELA Materials	Photo of grade level materials that were accommodated and modified that provided students with ESN access to grade level instruction as well as provided opportunities for increased participation.	Bader
14	Speech Educational Benefit Review	Electronic copy of the document created by the SLP team to vertically align speech and language goals to increase educational benefit for all students.	Luna
15	Modified Science Assignment	Image of a science assignment that was modified on the fly by Cleo to support student interest and engagement in the grade level lesson.	Cleo
16	Modified Math Assignments	Images of two modified math assignments created in collaboration between the para and gened teacher.	Cleo
17	MTSS Image	Copy of electronic image provided by the state regarding tiers of MTSS as presented in a schoolwide PD.	Dosie
18	District Strategic Plan	Referenced by many participants this artifact was downloaded from the district website and includes images around the districts commitments and strategic plan to support the new commitments.	Dosie
19	Belonging PD Materials	Download of the professional development materials on Belonging led by university partners	Marie
20	IEP Parent Information Night	Download from the district website information about upcoming parent information nights to support family understanding about their legal rights.	Marie

Note. This table displays the artifacts and documents participants provided as part of their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis phase I approached the collected data through a process of iteration whereby I interpreted and reflected upon the data followed by sense making (Saldaña, 2021). This sense making was followed by ongoing refinement and reiteration (Dooley, 2002). Each phase of data analysis occurred immediately following each of the interview phases. As indicated previously, each participant engaged in two individual interviews as well as one focus group interview. The observation phase occurred between the two individual interviews. The first interview occurred at the beginning of the study and helped to gather ideas for future observation opportunities. All participants were asked the same set of interview questions during interview 1 (see Appendix F) but questions for the second individual interviews (see Appendices G-O) were generated based on the individual observations that occurred over the previous data

collection sessions and included specific questions and wonderings I had about inclusionary practices from the observations. The second individual interview also occurred at the end of the study. To support with transcription of all interviews the Artificial Intelligence (AI) software called Otter.ai was used. While interviewing participants Otter.ai recorded the interview audio in real time and included a written transcript. Following each interview, I listened to each audio file verbatim, removing any inaccuracies from the transcript.

For the purposes of this study, I defined coding as, “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2021 p. 5). Coding supports the link between data collection and the analysis of its meaning. In examining the data set, I used both inductive and deductive coding processes. For example, deductively I familiarized myself with components of the study where I developed themes and claims and reasoned with the data from a general idea drawn from my theoretical frameworks to specific ideas in the data (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). Using an inductive process, I looked at the raw data, engaged in chunking the data into smaller sections/units, labeled them as categories, and finally looked for patterns across the categories that could make up the themes (Bhattacharya, 2017). When engaging with the data these patterns became an organizational way to help develop an in-depth understanding to explore the research questions (Bhattacharya, 2017).

My coding and analysis process was nonlinear as well as iterative (Bhattacharya, 2017). Iterative coding can be described as the “learn as I go approach” to generate codes the first time the data is reviewed (Saldaña, 2021). Structurally this looked like engaging in a process of open coding, followed by coding for categories, themes, and finally in the development of analytic claims (Bhattacharya, 2017). I implemented a code book along with memo writing to track and

organize all the data (see Appendix S for code book). During memo writing I engaged in a process of inquiry where I documented any emergent patterns, categories, or other ideas that I noticed all in effort to move towards a potential theory or theories (Saldaña, 2021). In addition to memo writing, I took field note data to document any emotions, body language, or other things that occurred during interviews that otherwise would not have been captured through an audio recording. When writing field notes, I captured what I felt to be descriptive notes (e.g., what people were saying or doing) as well as capturing reflective notes (e.g. questions and wonderings). Following each interview, observation, or artifact collection I followed a set of outlined procedures (see Appendix T for research protocol for data collection/analysis) to ensure each phase of data collection was done with fidelity.

More explicitly, coding methods and procedures are as follows. Firstly, pre-coding procedures were implemented and included interview transcription followed by preliminary jottings. I engaged in this method by printing out interview transcripts and reading for understanding while recording any preliminary words or phrases. From there I employed the exploratory coding method of creating a list of provisional or “a priori” codes that aligned with the studies framework, body of examined literature, and research questions (Saldaña, 2021). For example, during this step, I created the codes such as inclusion and belonging (see Table 5). This deductive method provided a coding starting point and employed the use of further coding methods. Table 5 lists all codes discussed with the full list of codes included via Appendix S.

Directly following pre-coding procedures, in first cycle of coding I leveraged the inductive and elemental coding method of initial/open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Open coding was leveraged to label, define, and describe the opinions of both participants in relation to the semi-structured and informal interviews. A line-by-line approach was taken when participant

interviews. Leveraging a line-by-line approach with interviews, the elemental methods of In Vivo coding and structural coding (Saldaña, 2021) were also used. In Vivo coding was used to understand and compile terms and concepts that were drawn from the participants to center and make meaning of participants' experiences in their inclusive setting (e.g., “can’t do it alone” and “centered in the stories of kids”) (see Table 5). Structural coding was implemented to sort into categories and themes to be compared based on commonalities, differences, and the relationships between the participants in relation to their work as educators and how past experiences have influenced their current understandings (e.g., ableism and family partnerships) (see Table 5). I used elemental coding methods of descriptive coding (e.g., flexible service delivery and vertical alignment) and process coding (e.g., strategic planning and learning by doing) for observations and artifacts as well (Saldaña, 2021) (see Table 5). Taking on a more macro-coding approach, I was better equipped to handle large sections of text. Using descriptive coding, basic labels were assigned whereas process coding was supportive in identifying observable activities. A total of 228 open codes were generated from the first round of coding.

During the second coding cycle I had the opportunity to share my preliminary findings at a peer reviewed conference. Preparing for the conference included focused coding or rather “selective coding” to identify the most frequent and significant codes (Charmaz, 2014). In this phase, I identified 50 of the most frequent codes and sorted them into preliminary themes. Preliminary themes presented at the conference included: the importance of outward facing mission and vision statements, natural environments, and cultures for collaboration. This opportunity for early analysis of the participants' interviews, focus groups, documents and artifacts helped support my subsequent rounds of reflective analysis with other second cycle coding methods.

Following the conference, I engaged in early drafting of the tentative themes while revisiting the data and engaging in recoding to further identify and refine patterns. During this final phase of analysis, I generated 61 new codes bringing the final total to 289 codes. This included 71 in vivo, 95 structural codes, 87 descriptive codes, and 36 process codes (see Appendix S). By engaging in a second round of coding, my comparative analysis from earlier phases helped me identify new themes. Some of the themes generated in this final phase included the importance of community partners, transparency, and student-centered structures. In addition to focused coding, the cumulative coding method of pattern coding supported my creation of richer and condensed forms of meaning (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding helped me develop statements that described themes, patterns of action, and shared ways of knowing and acting in the world (Daiute, 2014). The pattern coding I engaged in was guided by Saldaña and Omasta's (2016) "five Rs" (i.e., routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships) (p. 15). The Five Rs helped me to solidify hypotheses into instances of meaning. This is important to my study as this instrumental case study sought to understand how individuals and groups within a school have developed routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships with students, families, and their peers to continue to scale and sustain inclusionary practices across a system to benefit all students. Finally, at the conclusion of the three phases of coding, I organized codes into categories, themes, and finally claims.

Table 5*Sample Codes from Analysis Phases*

Coding Phase	Coding Method	Sample Codes
Precoding	Provisional Coding	Inclusion Equity Belonging
	In Vivo Coding	“Can’t do it alone” “Spheres of influence” “Centered in the stories of kids”
	Structural Coding	Ableism Family Partnerships Implicit Bias
	Descriptive Coding	Flexible Service Delivery Vertical Alignment Data Analysis Protocols
Initial Cycle	Process Coding	Strategic Planning Intentionality Learning By Doing
	Focused Coding	Belonging Collaboration Student Centered
Second Cycle	Pattern Coding	Collaborative Communities Practices to Scale and Sustain Clarity and Transparency
Third Cycle	Categories Themes Claims	Transparency Through Statements and Tools Strengths Based Instruction Collaborative Systems to Support Inclusive Strategies Student Centered Structures
Analysis		

Note. This table displays the coding phases, coding methods utilized, and sample codes.

Since I engaged in this work as a solo coder, I maintained a reflective journal which included analytic memos as well as engaged in regular check in meetings with my advisor. When meeting with my advisor I shared dilemmas about coding and analysis to continue to support my ongoing understanding of the findings (Burant et al., 2007). Furthermore, I also engaged in member checks with my participants to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, which are discussed in the next section. Engaging in multiple coding cycles helped me better understand

the perspectives of those participating and supported me in drawing meaning from their perspectives and exploring findings related to my research questions.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

I engaged in intentional efforts to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of my findings in multiple ways. First, the use of multiple data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, and document analysis) supported a richer interpretation of the data and strengthened the credibility of the findings (Miles et al., 2014). Furthermore, the decision to collect and make meaning from multiple data sources and participants in the focal district serves to strengthen the credibility of the findings (Dooley, 2002). This also supported triangulation by suppling evidence of consistency among varied and multiple data sources and participants (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Wolcott, 2005). During analysis the multiple data sources were compared and cross checked across the different participants who had different leadership roles, different backgrounds, taught different ages of students and different content areas, and existed in different schools. Triangulating my findings in multiple ways strengthens the credibility of my findings and counters any concern that the findings are from one singular method (Patton, 2015).

An additional way I was able to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of this study was to include member checks with the participants (see Appendix U for individual interview 1 member check template) (Maxwell, 2013). Member checks allowed participants the opportunity to review notes or preliminary findings at multiple stages to ensure that I had not misinterpreted their perspectives. The first level of member checks consisted of having participants review summaries of transcriptions for accuracy or inaccuracies (Bhattacharya, 2017). The second level of member check involved requesting that participants review my analysis and interpretation of their data for verification (Bhattacharya, 2017). This occurred in the second individual interview

where I shared my interpretations and summaries of the first interview as well as my summaries of their observations. Participants did not provide any comments, corrections, or changes.

As referenced in earlier sections, the final way I aimed to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness was through researcher reflexivity to disclose my assumptions, beliefs, bias, and values (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). Frequent analysis check-ins with my advisor created opportunities to process and reflect on preliminary claims about the data and provide support for such claims. Memo-ing following these analysis check-ins, created further opportunities for me to engage in reflexivity to support the development of the findings and focus my emerging claims around the study's two research questions.

Chapter 4: Scaling and Sustaining as a Whole System

In chapters 4 and 5, I organize the findings of this study to align with the two research questions: (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN? And (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? Chapter 4 presents findings on the first research question describing how the study participants, the inclusive practices leaders, describe and make sense of the efforts happening in the district related to scaling inclusive practices. Chapter 5 presents findings addressing the second research question about sustainability, citing specific practices that are valued as high leverage practices in each participant's respective roles. Throughout both chapters I present a collection of big picture ideas, themes, structures, and initiatives that are subsequently narrowed to become more focused, providing opportunity to showcase various sustainability measures across the district.

This study is intentionally focused on students with extensive support needs (ESN) because these students are most likely to be removed from general education and are the least likely to learn grade level standards and content (Kurth et al., 2014; Giangreco, 2020). Participants in this study consisted of nine inclusionary practice leaders from multiple schools in the focal district (see Table 1), Mount Rocket School District (MRSD). The participants are inclusionary practices leaders in formal or informal leadership roles and are as such defined in this work as anyone engaging in and upholding a commitment to inclusive education. Thus, the nine selected participants represent a mix of various disciplines and perspectives regarding how they interpret inclusion and inclusionary practices in their individual contexts, in their schools, and as a whole district.

This chapter presents findings aimed to address the study's first research question: How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN? This chapter will highlight inclusionary scaling efforts broadly, but most importantly it will highlight district decision making to support the inclusion of historically marginalized populations such as students with ESN. This chapter also includes discussion of key practices related to scaling inclusive practices district wide including community outreach, transparency and clarity, belonging through the lifespan, and building interdependent communities.

Listening to Community Partners

Firstly, through many informal conversations with participants and community members during and following the selection phase I learned that, after many years of frustrating district communication or lack thereof, the arrival of a new superintendent to MRSD brought about an era ripe for rebirth. Dosie, a district administrator, reported in interview 1, that community outreach became the number one activity that the district office chose to engage in to begin to understand the goals/perspective of the larger community, the district's educational staff, and students. During interviews and informal conversations with participants, everyone emphasized the need for the community to come together in support of a common goal or vision. District leaders embarked on a multi-month "listening tour" where they held community meetings, focus group meetings, school learning walks, engaged with staff, and analyzed data to draft a 5-year strategic plan and other supporting documents (Dosie, Interview 1). With listening to the community being at the forefront of district work, it was also important that all documents be created collaboratively as well as undergoing many rounds of feedback (Dosie, Interview 1).

District leadership took this process very seriously and engaged in member checks to ensure that community feedback was thoughtfully taken into consideration.

Many months and many drafts later the district created the strategic action plan, which was received positively from the community. Dosie reported during interview 1 that, “Teachers have been buzzing with the new school improvement plan and goals. They have not had anything like it in their system for years. Excitement with the data and what’s to come.” This energy served as a catalyst to continue outreach, supporting community healing and bonding over shared community goals (Figure 4). The community goals are representative of what students need to be successful in all walks of life as well as indicating where the community and other noneducation departments such as fiscal, would also be involved in supporting goal progress.

Figure 4

MRSD Community Goals

COMMUNITY GOALS



Goal 1: All students are ready for their future.



Goal 2: All students are safe, known, valued, and supported.



Goal 3: We recruit and retain an exceptional, caring workforce that reflects the diversity of the students we serve.



Goal 4: Family & community members are connected to schools and valued partners.



Goal 5: We effectively utilize resources and demonstrate transparent fiscal responsibility.

Note. This figure describes the district’s community goals. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

Alongside engaging with the community at large and working to build trust, the district also used new knowledge gained from learning walks and other conversations in specific school buildings to begin to create a bank of academic language to be used in future plans. Most of the academic language included in the district strategic plan, to be discussed in upcoming sections, supported efforts around creating transparency and connection to goals and terminology already being used in schools. Two schools became models to support decision making around scaling inclusionary practices district wide and are discussed in the following section.

“Past Shaping the Future”

While the community at large was eager to have their voices heard, so were two specific school buildings who had become strong voices and advocates for the multiply marginalized students in the district as they sought to think through education and school in general differently ensuring that all students feel welcome in their schools. Challenger High School (CHS) building administrator Neil reflected on the community outreach process around creating the strategic plan stating:

That was our community, our kids, our staff. They did these exchanges as part of our strategic plan that came from pretty much all of them or whoever wanted to participate.

In my opinion our whole strategic plan came together a lot quicker than I thought it could come together and it's been super helpful actually because it allows us to connect what we are doing here to the bigger purpose (Neil, Interview 1).

In this quote Neil thoughtfully reflects on the process the district engaged in and the success around providing a platform for all interested in being part of the process. Additionally, the success in creating structured ways for the community to engage decreased how long it took

them to finalize the documents and tools. Dosie shared, “by slowing down we were actually able to go faster” (Dosie, Interview 1).

For Neil, the district process to create a strategic plan and other supportive documents was especially important as it created a bridge or vertical alignment regarding what his school was trying to achieve, “the bigger purpose”, with the new commitments of the district (Neil, Interview 1). Furthermore, Neil indicated there was a hope that with district support the community could come together, “...in a way that meets the needs of all of our kids and raises the bar for everyone and believes that students can meet it” (Neil, Interview 1). For context, Neil’s school had been one of a few schools in the district that had been leading by example regarding the inclusion of all students in their buildings. While each school may approach the work differently, without district alignment they lacked the support to continue to build on their positive momentum as students passed through the system experiencing varying levels of inclusion or rather ability-based segregation based on the discretion of each of the neighborhood schools.

The second school team that was an integral part of shaping inclusive futures for their students and beyond was that of Exploration Middle School (EMS). Building administrator, Steve reflected on district scaling efforts stating:

As a district our strategy is really focusing on reaching those dreams and that mission for all students, we have to be working together. We’ve got to create a system that’s aligned, where we’re measuring student growth by using the same tools where we’re defining high levels of student learning in the same ways, and ultimately that we are a system where adults are constantly learning because as adults are learning, that’s when we know our student growth will also improve (Steve, Interview 1).

It was very important for Steve that the future district vision called out the need for increased collaboration, a focus on all students, and a commitment for all adults to continue learning.

Through the partnership with the innovative schools in the district, the district had a chance to vertically align all its schools to continue to support the intentional efforts being done in each school, but in a way that they build upon each other rather than being separate ideas.

Prior to the new district focus on community, both Steve and Neil's schools were instrumental in furthering their mission to support the communities in which they serve and beyond through their participation with statewide inclusionary efforts (Steve, Interview 2; Neil, Interview 2). What they achieved, they did so without the district's intentional focus on inclusion. Operating in their own silos, they furthered the work they were passionate about which was the inclusion of all individuals, collaboration, and student-centered decision making. Neil stated:

I definitely wanted to save all kids...but I quickly realized I couldn't do it by myself...how do we do this in a way that meets the needs of all our kids and raises the bar for everyone and believes that all students can meet it (Neil, Interview 1).

Furthermore, collaboration supported forward progress in these inclusive and innovative schools and assisted in the creation of unifying messaging to align school communities which allowed them to reach their shared goals. It is also important to note that, however strong any initial messaging was, both schools realized the need to adopt guidance that contained more clarity regarding the school's respective ideologies and goals. Meaning, each school noted the importance of unifying messages that were transparent, serving to dispel any myths around who belongs in general education, as well as being visible to all (e.g., banners hung in the hallway, quotes on letter head, etc.). The physical presence of these ideologies and goals scaled the way in which terminology was being referenced by staff and students alike. The mission and vision

statements of each of these schools, to be discussed in the upcoming section, supported the scaling of inclusive language at the district level.

Transparency Through Statements and Tools

Drawing from the district's early inclusionary leaders, the district's work to engage with the community supported renewed excitement and hope that the community voices would be heard as district leadership actively brought decision making back to community members. This intentionality supported the positioning of those closest to the problems in a position to bring about creative ways to address solutions. This outreach laid the groundwork for identifying the need for clear, common, and/or plain language that is understood by the community which supports guiding further conversations moving forward. Specifically, this looked like the district process of creating a five year strategic plan (Dosie, Artifact 18), to be discussed in multiple upcoming sections, that included the district's new mission and vision statement, promise statement, values statement, and priority goal areas which were all thoughtfully designed and published for the whole community to access.

Dosie shared that the purpose in creating the strategic plan was to, “align district efforts and resources to provide a framework for monitoring results so that we can make informed decisions to effectively meet the needs of our students, staff, families, and community” (Dosie, Interview 1). The new strategic plan served to not only provide clarity and transparency but, it was to ensure that all decision making was data driven and followed the community goals to ensure that meaningful progress was made across every department (i.e., teaching and learning, human resources, fiscal, etc.) in the district. Shared in district leadership meeting, the established collective commitments of the district office which included: (1) expect professionalism (i.e. being on time, present, engaged, prepared, respectful, supportive, etc.) from self and others, (2)

use data and evidence to drive decisions, (3) keep high levels of learning for ALL kids at the center of the work (academic equity), (4) focus on the greater good for the whole system, and (5) problem-solve before identifying barriers and make decisions by consensus using the first-to-five structure. (Dosie, Observation 1/Artifact 17). Figure 5 provides an image from the meeting agenda referencing the collective commitments).

Figure 5

District Office Collective Commitments

COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS	
To meet the District Guiding Coalition Purpose, we will:	
1.	Expect professionalism from self and others (*professionalism defined below)
2.	Use data and evidence to drive decisions
3.	Keep high levels of learning for ALL kids at the center of the work (academic equity)
4.	Focus on the greater good for the whole system.
5.	Problem-solve before identifying barriers and make decisions by consensus using the first-to-five structure
* professionalism includes modeling behaviors such as being on time, present, engaged, prepared, respectful, supportive, etc.	

Note. This figure outlines the district commitments to center all decision-making efforts in every department.

These collective commitments tied in with the community goals (Figure 4) and support the notion that all members of the district would be contributing towards the strategic plan. The salient message that decision making will be done through a lens of meeting the needs of the whole community and that true commitment requires outward-facing guidance to support staff understanding. One way early inclusive school leaders at CHS and EMS modeled this transparency was using inclusive mission and vision statements.

Outward Facing Mission & Vision Statements

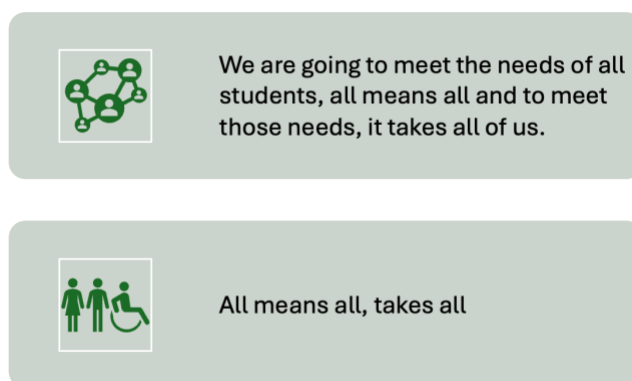
The middle school that Steve supports, one of the exemplary school community leaders, was the first school in the system to adopt a more inclusive mindset through a transparent and published mission and vision statement. However, prior to Steve, Neil was leading the charge at EMS in his first ever attempt to bring the community together to create a common and more

unifying language that was representative of all members of their community which included students with disabilities. Neil eventually moved to his current role at CHS with Steve taking over to continue Neil’s inclusive visioning and equity work.

Figure 6 displays the mission and vision example from EMS. Steve explains in interview 1, that the mission of EMS is that, “we are going to meet the needs of all students...all means all and to meet those needs, it takes all of us.” Steve also adds that more popular among the staff is the shortened and more accessible phrasing, “all means all, takes all.” This mission statement created by teachers and staff was an attempt to center the needs of students first and foremost, but to also bring the school closer together breaking down system-imposed silos in addition to the teacher-imposed silos, otherwise known as teachers who prefer working alone to collaboration. Since the mission states the intent to meet the needs of all learners in the entire school, it is also recognized that the whole school community needs to come together to share their unique expertise. This allows all individuals to grow and expand their bank of knowledge regarding strategies that are supportive of all students, including students with disabilities.

Figure 6

Exploration Middle School Mission Statement



Note. This figure shows the long and short versions of the EMS mission statement. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

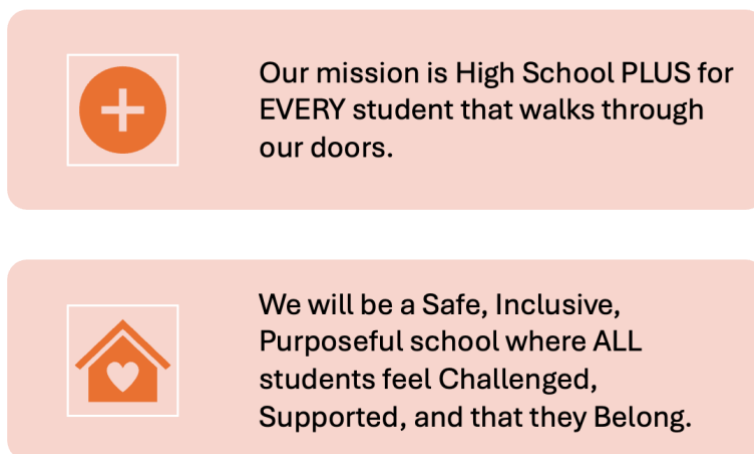
For students with ESN this new mission statement served as a call out that they were also being invited and welcomed into the classrooms that were rightfully theirs to be in. However, while the new mission statement gave teachers a shared language and a physical document to guide conversations about students, teachers still needed explicit mention that students with ESN were also included in this statement (Steve, Interview 1). While no formal planning document or roll out documentation existed at the middle school regarding a plan for increased inclusion of individuals with disabilities, the mission statement brought about the faculty's desire and need to increase their methods for collaboration to prepare for increased inclusion of students with ESN. This led to the development of more tools to support transparency around roles, responsibilities, systems, and structures to support the collaboration needed for this new work. The specific practices, structures, etc. will be explicitly discussed in chapter 5 to address the second research question around sustainability and support for students with ESN.

A few years after the establishment of inclusive practices at EMS, Neil transitioned to the high school where he again took on the process of bringing the high school community together around the creation of a new mission and vision. Neil's development of these statements from one school to the next was an unintentional move that has directly supported district scaling efforts around common inclusive language and vertical alignment between EMS and CHS. Neil reflected on the process of creating the new mission and vision saying, "we wanted to involve as many stakeholders as we could...students and staff." CHS created a mission and vision that focused on supporting student goals at present and in the future. Furthermore, they were guided by specific data that indicated that high school transition plans for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were either under-utilized or students were not meeting their transition goals. CHS mission and vision statement indicated in Figure 7 was established and reads, "Our

mission is High School PLUS for EVERY student that walks through our doors. Our vision is that we will be a Safe, Inclusive, Purposeful school where ALL students feel Challenged, Supported, and that they Belong.”

Figure 7

Challenger High School Mission & Vision Statement



Note. This figure showcases CHS’s mission and vision statement. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

For students with IEPs, including students with ESN, the mission and vision statement served as an intentional call to action that the school was going through a process of thinking, wondering, dreaming, and designing to support greater learning around transition planning and goals for all students but especially for students with ESN. District administrator Marie discussed:

I am wondering about the balance of keeping the rigor of high school, keeping the gened classes, but also accurately representing some kind of adaptive or functional needs that the student would need to be successful...we need to get better at that right now so we can truly help the student holistically (Marie, Interview 2).

The school commitment also shows the importance the team has towards community growth in wanting to prepare young people for life after school, whatever that journey looks like for them. Additionally, the vision statement provides language around belonging to support feelings of safety and achievement but also names that students will be challenged and supported with high expectations. Furthermore, the emphasis on inclusivity, belonging, and preparation for post-school success provided the transparency to staff that students with ESN are also deserving of safety and high expectations.

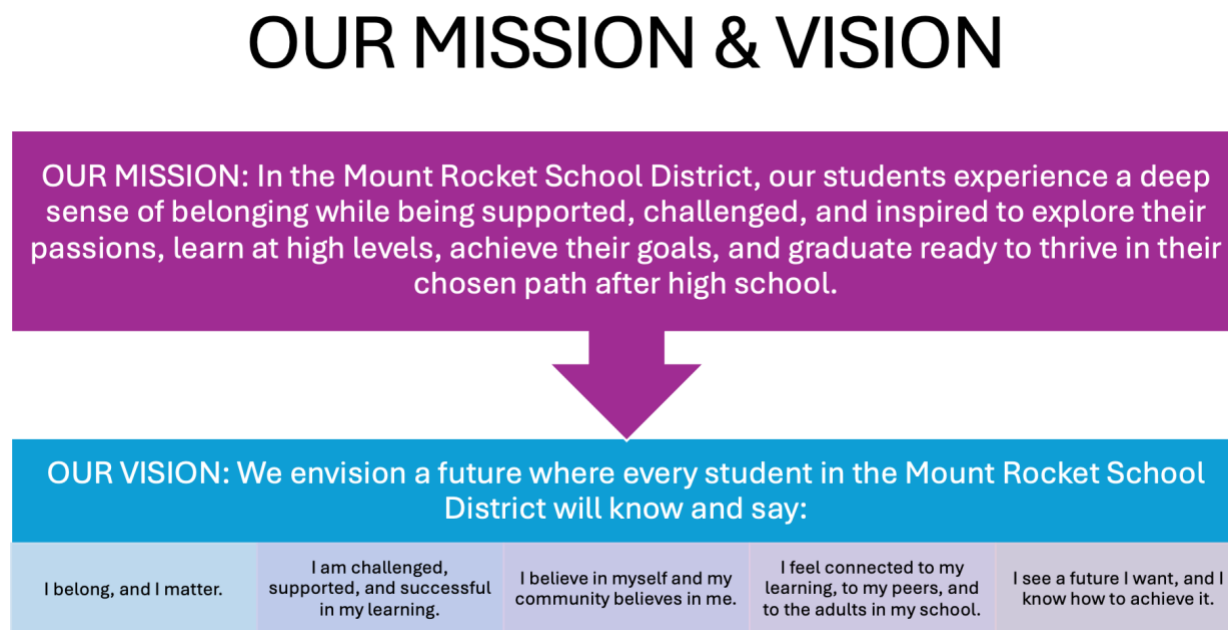
While the two school's mission and vision statements are different, they both center the strengths of each school community and are vertically aligned to each other supporting scale through "all students" language. Additionally, vertical alignment supported continuity between schools regarding inclusive opportunities with the commitments that students with disabilities are served more often in general education settings through collaboration and flexibility with all team members. These intentional mission and vision statements provided the momentum needed to increase academic and social activities for students with ESN who had previously been denied access for various reasons as explored in chapters 1 and 2.

Referencing these examples paired with community input, the district community began to create a mission and vision and other guiding documents to lead their whole community towards a new future that involved working towards inclusion for all learners. For the district, they started with attendance as a unifying factor in the roll out of the strategic plan. This provided the district with a starting point to unify the people which in turn yielded a high percentage of teacher, staff, student, and family buy-in towards the new strategic plan. Figure 8 (Dosie, Artifact 18) displays key aspects of the district mission and vision. Language linking the plans from the middle school and high school were intentionally included to provide a bridge and

vertical alignment for those schools to continue to build on their momentum as well as providing the framework for other schools to follow suit with the development of their school's future mission and vision plans.

Figure 8

District Mission & Vision Statement



Note. This figure describes the MRSD mission and vision statement. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

Dosie reflected that attendance concerns and the introduction of the published statements provided a “clear message that this is where we are going. That we are not going to stay here, so what are the next steps for each person, each team (Dosie, Interview 1).” Marie added, “There is no way we are staying here, so what is the next step for each person, each team, each principal (Marie, Interview 1).” In other words, the district is now leading with the commitment that they will not leave anyone behind and to do that every member of the community plays a pivotal role in supporting all students. Most importantly, what occurs in and out of the classroom matters

when it comes to helping students feel like they belong across all spaces and places. Dosie added:

We know we can't ensure high levels of learning for all kids if we are not attuned to giving kids what they need when they need it, and then making sure kids feel a strong sense of belonging and inclusivity when they come to school, otherwise you're not going to come to school (Dosie, Interview 1).

Dosie's quote highlights how the district emphasized that no one is exempt from supporting the growth of students. Furthermore, the attention to belonging was strategic as it tied in the work from the schools leading in inclusive scaling (EMS and CHS). It also included acknowledgement of the research around belonging and its power to increase attendance and close the achievement gap thus increasing graduation rates and post-graduation success. Additionally, it also provided the district with a non-confrontational goal that served as an on-ramp for collective buy-in. Meaning, goals were intentionally chosen that seemed, "the least threatening to our teachers because it doesn't implicate their practice as much as they might realize it actually does (Dosie, Interview 1)."

Plans Include Commitments to Fostering Belonging

The intentionality to use belonging as an entry point for supporting inclusion efforts helped dispel fear over what inclusion and equity mean and provided transparency for the community, specifically noting that in MRSD inclusion and equity mean that "different kids need different things" (Dosie, Interview 1). As such the district mission and vision was designed to provide that framework that seeks to provide all kids a chance to belong and thrive. For that to be possible, all members must come together and collaborate to support inclusive efforts.

In addition to belonging being referenced in the district mission and vision, another published and outward facing document from the district that included belonging language was their district promise. Taking a cue from the middle school team looking for a shorter way to encompass their mission and vision, the district created a shorter, more accessible version, known as their district promise. Figure 9 (Dosie, Artifact 18) displays the visual of the district promise which utilized three words that defined and encompassed the mission and vision in its simplest form, “Belong. Believe. Achieve.” To add to the three-pronged promise the district included sentences demonstrating the terms in action so that administrators, teachers, and staff could begin to visualize how they could be actively engaged in change efforts.

Figure 9

District Promise Statement

OUR PROMISE

BELONG	BELONG. We aim to create and an environment in which our students feel they belong within their school communities – where they are accepted and supported.
BELIEVE	BELIEVE. We believe in our students’ capacity to learn, grow, and thrive, and we want our students to believe in themselves.
ACHIEVE	ACHIEVE. We hold our students to high academic standards and provide them with the support to achieve their own personal goals – now and in the future.

Note. This figure describes the MRSD promise statement. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

While the many outward facing documents provided transparent messaging about belonging for all, plans for professional development (PD) were also developed at the district

level. These were developed to provide district employees the training to know and understand how to work on belonging citing that belonging can be easier to affirm, but much harder to define. The training emphasized that schools that are committed to the concept of belonging must have a strong understanding of the practices and postures that contribute to this goal. To support this, the district sought outside support in the form of a university inclusion specialist to provide a back-to-school fall and winter session focused on belonging (Marie, Interview 2).

Developing Cultures of Belonging Through Direct Instruction

Although it is important that belonging was part of the district mission, vision, and promise, it was equally important that district teachers and staff became experts on what belonging really meant and how everyone could develop their expertise in the area. Thus, another way the district unified the community and addressed scale was through focused professional development on belonging both with the district as a whole system. This intentional planning of PD supported the district message that the inclusive mission of centering all students would not be just another initiative that lost momentum over time. The district committed to training educators, staff, and community members to understand the research and know how to set meaningful goals related to belonging. To support this scaling goal and identify future work, the district contracted with outside partners to provide the PD to their school community as well as follow up coaching conversations about belonging to specific schools for individuals as needed.

To ensure that this PD opportunity was not just a one-off presentation, the outside partners were heavily involved in collaboration with the district including collaborating directing with building principals. The outside partners and building principals created a post PD workshop activity around goal setting that was led by the principals of each school, which

included Neil and Steve. Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018) guidance, principals and other leaders were given autonomy to adjust the materials to best serve the strengths and needs of their communities. However, each school had the same directive which was to converse and collaborate with one another regarding how individuals, departments, and the school would engage with specific dimensions of belonging to support all students, but especially students with ESN. One of the breakout sessions related to this PD was one of Steve's observations for this study. Artifacts and commentary from Steve are shared below as well as the goals from various schools in the district for comparison.

In Steve's first observation, during the activity, he thoughtfully used chart paper to support collaboration and movement with his staff. Figure 10 (Steve, Artifact 9) shows the result of the session with the departments getting together to choose one of the 10 dimensions of belonging (Carter & Biggs, 2021) from the PD and then articulate how each department planned to meet those belonging goals. While there was variation in the dimensions chosen, the dimension that most teams resonated with and built goals around was the idea of being "supported." The components that were missing from the list, that were not chosen by any of the teams, were "present" and "heard". Most importantly, Steve created a space for staff where they could approach this workshop activity with a perspective or lens that centered the strengths of the building and its teachers/staff. Steve stated that;

We are dreaming of creating a school that none of us experienced, because schools have historically not been set up that way, so can we be given permission to focus on belonging, giving permission to be in that learning stance (Steve, Interview 2).

This quote shows how through Steve's leadership, he understands the questions, excitement, and fear that many staff were feeling around the district moves towards belonging and learning goals

to support leaders with ESN and beyond. He emphasized that staff were not only allowed to be in a learning stance, but that staff were encouraged to be vulnerable in this learning. His message included emphasizing that perfection is not a requirement, but effort and commitment to what is best for kids is.

Figure 10

EMS Department Belonging Goals

Collaborative Team	Dimension of Belonging	Structure/Strategy/Practice to Implement
ELA 11	Welcomed	Greet at the door
	Known	Positive noticing of students
	Supported	Extra time devoted to differentiating instruction
ELA 12	Known	Personal contact for each student by a team member
	Needed	Reach out to parents preemptively to compliment students
	Heard	Work to get more students to have their voices heard
Algebra	Supported	Collect and analyze student data
	Supported	Offer opportunities for remediation
	Supported	Share instructional strategies that are working
Alg II and Geo	Supported	Frequent and collaborative student feedback
	Involved	Students tracking their progress
	Known	Increasing student voice ... students sharing about themselves (google slide); implementing CLR strategies; intro songs they request; monthly check ins
Science	Supported	complete unit cycle including interventions so all students are supported
	Involved	deliberately allow time for students to reflect / self assess
	Involved	Try a CLR engagement strategy
W Lang	Befriended	Peer to Peer conversations to encourage connections they may not be aware of
	Supported	Cross-curricular partnerships with other teachers and departments to share learning
	Involved	ASL Club; Spanish Club
SS 9 & 10	Supported	Common intervention plans / strategies
	Supported	Unit smart goals and unit plan dates
	Involved	Cognate vocab activities
SS 11 & 12	Welcomed	Greet and fist bump at the door
	Known	Call students by name
	Supported	Try to learn more Spanish vocab and use it in class
PBS	Involved	Students lead question of the day
	Needed	More student examples of skills used put up in the classroom
	Invited	Kids pick the check-in questions
SLC	Involved	Work w/ ASB to get SLC students more involved in activities
	Accepted	More parties in SLC so more students can be accepting of SLC students
	Involved	Revamping the club (Bearcat Enterprises) to be more involved across the school
PE; Music; Art	Welcomed	Welcoming students at first contact
	Supported	Energy and honesty for the students always
	Needed	Students are not a burden, we are always here for them

Note. This figure describes the EMS belonging goals chosen by each department. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

Following the activities led by Steve and other leaders in their own breakout rooms, Steve led his team to think about three belonging goals that the whole school could commit to working on. These goals were published alongside the goals from all the buildings in the rest of

the school district. In Figure 11 (Steve, Artifact 9), EMS is example school B, and chose to focus on supporting students feeling “welcomed, befriended, and accepted.” While not directly observed, Neil’s staff goals at CHS were recorded and listed as school C. Across the sample school goals, nine out of ten dimensions of belonging were represented. The only dimension missing from the list was “needed”.

Figure 11

MRSD School Building Belonging Goals

School	Dimension of Belonging	Belonging Goals/Next Steps
Example School	Present	Goal 1: Increase the Physical Presence of Students with Disabilities in General Education, Non-Academic, Spaces
	Accepted	Goal 2: Increase Disability Awareness and Promote Understanding
	Heard	Goal 3: Integrate Student Voice into Daily Classroom Activities and Decision-Making
Discovery Elementary School (DES)	Invited	Goal 1: We will increase school-wide student activities that promote student involvement.
	Supported	Goal 2: We will enhance student learning and achievement by fostering structured peer-support systems that promote collaboration, engagement, and academic growth.
	Heard	Goal 3: The perspectives of each student are sought out, listened to, and respected by others.
Exploration Middle School (EMS)	Welcomed	Goal 1: We aim to ensure every student - especially new, isolated, or group-oriented students - feels valued and included.
	Befriended	Goal 2: Through peer connections, diverse activities, and staff support, we will foster meaningful interactions and a stronger sense of belonging.
	Accepted	Goal 3: Through positive relationships, clear expectations, and inclusive practices, we will foster mutual understanding and a strong sense of community.
Challenger High School (CHS)	Welcomed	Goal 1: We will positively greet students throughout the building each day
	Involved	Goal 2: We will continue to increase our capacity to use CLR strategies in the classroom w/ more teachers trained in the strategies, modeling CLR strategies at staff meetings, and using one staff meeting per month to continue to teach our staff the CLR strategies that validate and affirm cultural behaviors and build and bridge our students to what is expected in school
	Supported	Goal 3: We will continue to grow our collaboration in answering the 4 Qs of a PLC, increasing our capacity to intentionally and collectively intervene with students that have yet to demonstrate proficiency
Apollo Elementary School (AES)	Present	Goal 1: We will create opportunities for fluid interactions between students in different classrooms (SLC / GenEd) and look at increasing the accessibility options for recess equipment and classroom furniture arrangements.
	Known	Goal 2: We will develop systems to allow staff to learn and share information about individual students, including pronouns, supports needed, equipment / strategies available, etc.
	Heard	Goal 3: We will create opportunities for student voice and feedback and a system for supporting students while escalated, so they are heard and staff involved are able to close the communication loop

Note. This figure describes the district wide belonging goals. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

Despite ongoing work that established outward facing mission and vision statements that included language referencing all students, explicit commitments to fostering cultures of belonging, and focused school PD and coaching one belonging, one major issue remained that impacted the district’s ability to scale inclusive practices for students with ESN. This issue was that not every school served each population of students. Specifically, many students with ESN

and other disabilities were not presently attending their neighborhood school at the time of the study. Instead, multiple schools in the district served as program placement options for students with ESN. Dosie stated that:

To increase belonging in schools we also wanted to see increased belonging in student communities. Bussing to the school that has the program was removed and all schools are now in the beginning stages of all schools being able to serve all students (Dosie, Interview 1).

Thus, the next natural step in MRSD's inclusive journey to support district wide scaling of inclusive practices was to create school communities that were representative of the home communities themselves. This included ensuring that students with ESN attended their neighborhood schools.

Belonging Through the Lifespan

Since belonging does not just occur in one place or moment, it was important for the district to reflect on how they were going to skillfully convey the message that belonging occurs in schools and home communities and across the lifespan. Thus, conversations began regarding how students were placed in the district. Historically, student placement was often determined based on buildings where teachers who were deemed to be the best person to support specific students worked or where specific facilities could best accommodate specific student needs (e.g., ramps, accessible restrooms, sensory equipment, etc.). For example, not every elementary school employed a teacher with training to support students with ESN, so students with ESN were bussed to the building where the teacher with the credential and expertise was located, which was often located outside of the students' neighborhood communities. Marie reflected:

We should have a spectrum of options. Every student with complex support needs should be in their neighborhood school. That's inclusion. If we don't have that we are literally not doing inclusion. You should be able to go to your neighborhood school and then let's see how we can support you there...so that's scale (Marie, Interview 2).

Thus, to increase belonging in schools the district considered the need to start by increasing student belonging in their home neighborhood communities as well. This involved thinking intentionally about structural supports needed to make that possible.

Attendance at Neighborhood Schools

To support students and families experiencing belonging in their communities, the district advocated and supported the return of students to their neighborhood schools. Dosie stated, “We are no longer removing our multiply marginalized populations from their home and school communities” (Dosie, Interview 1). While families were enthusiastic about the return to neighborhood schools plan, it brought up a lot of feelings amongst staff regarding readiness. Marie reflected on this reaction, stating that, “We’re ready. Nobody thinks they’re ready, but our kids are ready. Our kids are here. We’re ready. We’re doing it” (Marie, Interview 1). This view represents Marie’s urgency regarding the need to support these students as well as the belief that the staff do have the skills to enact the plan. In her quote, Marie dispels the myth that more training will make everyone ready and instead emphasizes that staff can learn together on the job. However, to have students return to home schools there was still the matter of making sure supports were in place to support both students and staff. Thus, the district planned that people with specific knowledge regarding how to support students with ESN should be placed at each site to help develop scale around specific knowledge and training. Resource mapping supported this vision.

Resource Mapping to Support Need

When students attend their neighborhood schools it creates more natural environments that reflect the uniqueness and diversity in our communities. To support these diverse communities, knowledgeable staff need to be strategically positioned at each school so that students with ESN can be supported in experiencing meaningful belonging. To make this vision and reality, each school in MRSD was “mapped” to determine its individual strengths and growth areas. Marie stated: “We don’t need to bring anything new, we need to highlight the strengths of our current team members and do some resource mapping to place these experts in positions in which they can support students and teachers” (Marie, Interview 2). Informal conversation with many participants indicated the district was having discussion around what schools would need to support students attending their neighborhood school. For facilities, various accessibility features (e.g., ramps, elevators, automatic doors, etc.) were noted. Facilities planning to ensure that all schools were updated to have the same accessibility features at each site also supported scaling. For personnel, the district wanted to ensure that each building had someone knowledgeable to support students with different academic, communication, behavioral, or other health needs. The district used creative hiring to explore how they could be fiscally responsible while also providing each school with the staffing they needed.

Other informal conversations with participants indicated ongoing district conversations focused on where the students with the most extensive needs should be attending and the types of teacher and staff support that would be needed in those schools. This meant that teacher and paraeducator expertise was considered when thinking through potential moves for teachers and staff. Placement of related service providers was also taken into consideration. For example, speech and language pathologists (SLPs) with a particular skill set regarding alternative

communication might be primarily placed at a school site with a high population of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users. In one instance, Luna, an SLP with an AAC specialty was elevated by the district to a newly created AAC specialist position to support student communication across the district (Marie, Interview 2). This was a move that had not previously been done in the district and was a direct result of resource mapping to understand the skill sets of current employees to best support student needs. Marie reflected on this process and shared her excitement about elevating the expertise of all the educators in their district. She stated:

I have really, really, really, really, since, really believed in creating teacher leadership to do the work. In any work, not just belonging or inclusion, but the boots on the ground.

The teacher leaders that are doing the work can be the best educators to their direct peers.

This is what gives me the most excitement and joy (Marie, Interview 1).

In tandem with students returning to their neighborhood schools and the resource mapping strategies taking place in the district, Marie was a primary driver for the implementation of a fully inclusive preschool. While preschool was not offered at every school, the movement of students to their neighborhood schools helped make space for an inclusive preschool program and transitional kindergarten (TK) classrooms. This shift was supported by the community. One TK classroom was staffed by a long-time general education teacher with no special education training, but who was open to trying and learning new things. Marie described how that general education teacher/participant Molly engaged:

[She] dove into it this year and it's absolutely been messy and fantastic and well get better...and Molly is a teacher leader helping to lead that work and I've given her release time to go model for others and really boosting her skill in that area...she's the kind of

person like, God I don't need a para. I don't need this person. We've got it, I've got it
(Marie, Interview 2).

Additionally, informal conversation with Marie indicated that to provide more specific inclusionary practices support, Marie worked out of the elementary school that housed the preschool and Molly's TK class. This provided her with ongoing opportunities to provide Molly and others coaching and support. These are the many ways the district thought flexibly to support community growth related to belonging and the scaling of inclusive practice service delivery across the district. These creative moves also helped to set the stage for the creation of interdependent and collaborative communities, which was the final theme and strategy the district used to scaling inclusive practices district wide.

Building Interdependent Communities

The final way the district scaled inclusive practices for all, but especially for students with ESN, was through the development of building interdependent communities. This involved prioritizing a shift from teachers working in isolation or self-imposed silos to increasing cultures of connection and support amongst teachers across the district. This ensured that the strengths of everyone, as well as the resources available, were known and shared which supported greater sustainability of work in the system. While building interdependent communities might not have been a planned or strategic district goal, the findings shared by the inclusionary leaders who participated in this study illustrate how these changes created mutual reliance between people and systems. Often this included highlighting how teachers' individual strengths could be brought together to support other educators, students, and the greater community. Steve reflected on interdependence stating that:

I think the vision is really our commitment to all students to work not independently, that we work interdependently with a team of adults addressing the challenges of learning and that we stay in a learning and curious stance throughout the process (Steve, Interview 1).

As Steve noted earlier, taking a learning stance requires a certain vulnerability to remain open to new learning and connecting with fellow peers. Figure 12 (Dosie, Artifact 18) showcases the MRSD values statement indicating the values of collaboration, integrity, excellence, student centeredness, belonging, and equity that all support a guiding framework toward creating interdependent communities.

Figure 12

District Values Statement



Note. This figure describes the district values statement. This graphic has been recreated to de-identify the school.

To encourage the vulnerability required to be in a learning stance, the district emphasized building professional learning communities, supporting schools with the creation of inclusive building schedules that put the needs of students first, and fostering educator agency. These areas provided a framework or clear expectations to extend these specific inclusionary practices across the district which created balance and continuity in the district schools and communities.

Professional Learning Communities

Before the district initiative to increase inclusionary practices leveraged the lens of belonging, the district had been engaging in professional development about professional learning communities (PLC). This involved collaborating with another outside partner/organization to provide PD and coaching to all staff over several years. Engagement in PLC communities supported educator growth around data driven instruction, implementation of best practices, and a commitment to building cultures of shared responsibility and collective efficacy. Engagement in these PLCs was one way collaboration around belonging and supporting individuals with disabilities was able to thrive, but it was the district's fiscal commitment to continuing the PD/coaching over the years that supported scaling those practices district wide. This commitment ensured all staff were given the option to acquire specific skills for inclusionary practices. PLCs provided the framework to support collaboration at its highest level. Figure 12 describes collaboration as the way teams will, “work and learn as collaborative teams, empowering all individuals to contribute their diverse skills, voice, and insights resulting in collective responsibility for student learning.” This quote emphasizes the commitment the district has to the voices of all its members as well as the importance of developing teacher autonomy and agency. Throughout this process, the district remained committed to their message that

schools should not only continue to prioritize collaboration, but building schedules should be built around this collaborative practice.

Student Centered Building Schedules

The creation of building schedules is often work that is not privy to staff outside of specific leadership team members (e.g., principal, assistant principal, counselor). Traditionally many barriers (e.g., specialist time for art, music, PE, library) have contributed to the lack of inclusive building schedules existing. Often district leadership asks schools to incorporate different initiatives into their schedule which can feel like a disruption. However, in the case of district scaling of inclusive practices and MRSD, the district directive was for leaders to create a schedule that put the needs of students first. Leaders were directed to design a schedule that reflected the district mission, vision, and goals as well as the mission, vision, and goals of the specific school. In reflecting on the creation of inclusive building schedules, Neil stated:

To create a schedule that is best for students, if there are competing priorities, decisions will be centered on student outcomes and the impact on our most vulnerable student populations. Maximize your FTE creating extra support and schedule for students that need it. Students will include challenging courses that are accessible to all students (Neil, Interview 1).

Neil's message signals that while he listens to the needs of individuals and departments, he takes a student first approach. This means that student needs come before teacher/staff needs. He added that the secret to a balanced building schedule is to place resources where the needs exist. For example, this could include providing more resources and support to transitional times such as 9th grade. This reflects a commitment to placing extra support or the right support in places for students with ESN to be successful, but it also involves reviewing schoolwide data to see

where growth is needed. For example, at CHS math was an area of focus for the school after looking at academic achievement data. This meant that the building schedule included placing knowledgeable paraeducators in math, creating co-taught math options, and offering math support classes for students to get a double dose of math to help grow their fluency.

For Neil at CHS, the district supported a strategic move away from an 8 class course load to a 6 period a day. This move increased students' ability to navigate the course work and expectations of their classes as well as provided more consistency of daily routine. For students with ESN, the consistency of six classes occurring every day supported reduced confusion around transition and increased self-determination and independence. This move also increased the number of classes that could be co-taught, moving away from co-taught courses only being offered to those that required them per their IEPs and instead opening them up to all students, including students with ESN. At CHS the move to provide co-taught math instruction for all of 9th grade Algebra supported CHS' ability to help set up all freshmen for college and career readiness, which aligned with their mission and vision. While many of these moves came with direct support from the district, another unintentional way scaling of inclusive practices improved without district intervention or guidance was through the collaborative conversations staff had at all levels which supported them in advocating for change.

Fostering Educator Agency

Interdependent communities began to flourish at MRSD through district guidance and dedicated time for collaboration with peers through intentional building schedules. Outside coaching partners (e.g., university partners and other content specific coaches from non-profits), supported individuals in developing the skill to create systems, structures, lessons, materials, and

more that are intentionally designed for every student. Thinking about the role of agency as a district leader Dosie stated:

In my role, the best gift I can give people in the school district is to remind them that they are the biggest difference makers when it comes to school in the lives of that child, not me, not their principal, but them. You have agency. You're the difference maker and hopefully that spawn's efficacy right at the same time (Dosie, Interview 2).

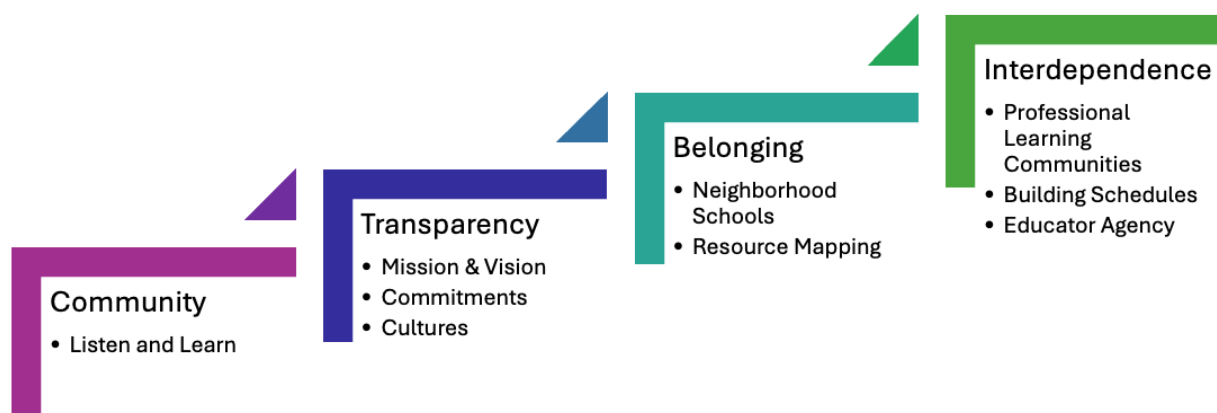
Marie reflected that, "The overall vision is that...we are all going to get better. It's fun to see people grow in their confidence as experts who may not have had confidence, that's a huge celebration" (Marie, Interview 2). Marie also elaborated that this confidence starts when people are given the platform finding their "authentic voice". Additionally, Dosie described how he sees his role in formal leadership to, "...build confidence in our teachers...a lot of it is just building capacity, making sure that teachers feel comfortable with personalizing approaches for kids and giving them that permission" (Dosie, Interview 2). This meant giving educators permission to exercise autonomy and use their expertise to adjust instruction and reflection to review the data to ensure those approaches were the right ones to take. Supporting a teacher's agency in this way only works if it is supported by a system that celebrates everyone's valuable expertise. This illustrates how inclusionary leaders do not have to come with a formal title, but rather that leadership comes from confidence and culture that centers community voice.

In closing, the findings in this chapter highlighted how MRSD engaged in planning to support the scaling of inclusionary practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN. The findings include a timeline of strategic and unplanned events that showcased the district's moves to support all students, but most importantly the moves that supported learners with ESN. The strategic moves began with engagement with community partners and the

importance of listening to the community as well as utilizing the strengths already naturally occurring in the district at key school sites like EMS and CHS. After this engagement the district made an intentional decision to create outward facing statements and tools to support transparency and give the community the language to engage in conversations, challenging or otherwise, to bring about unity and commitment to support holistic student growth. Third, the district provided focused professional development to district staff to support school goals related to belonging while also thinking creatively about how to support students with ESN in their neighborhood. This simultaneously fostered neighborhood cultures of belonging focusing on supporting students as they grow older and become not just part of their schools, but their communities. Finally, the importance of building interdependent communities grew from district wide commitment to collaboration and the development of educator agency. Figure 13 provides a visual representation of the findings from this chapter which support the scaling of specific structural inclusionary practices that act to support students with ESN and beyond.

Figure 13

District Vision for Scale & Sustainability Findings



Note. This figure describes findings to this chapter regarding the district vision for scale statement.

While this chapter was focused on decision making pertaining to scale and aspects of sustainability, specific inclusionary practices individuals, schools, or the district chose to uphold occurred alongside district scaling efforts. For example, inclusive practices that support both scale and sustainability included community engagement, inclusive mission and vision statements, developing cultures of belonging, professional learning communities/collaboration, and inclusive building schedules. Chapter 5 will dive deeper into the findings from the second research question referencing specific inclusionary practices individual educators, departments, or schools utilized that support the sustainability of scaling inclusive practices for individuals with ESN.

Chapter 5: Inclusionary Practice Leaders Scaling and Sustaining in their Contexts

To address research question 2, chapter 5 focuses on how faculty, staff and community at MRSD engaged in specific inclusionary practices to support sustainability of school and district inclusive scaling efforts. While there were many inclusive practices that participants engaged in, not all the practices shared by participants were leveraged to support those with ESN.

Research question 2 asks: How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? This chapter describes the inclusionary practices that have been used specifically to support sustainability measures for students with ESN. The inclusive practices discussed in this chapter have been organized into (a) student centered structures and (b) collaborative systems that support inclusive instructional strategies.

Schools that Scale and Sustain

Many specific inclusionary practices are supportive of both scale and sustainability. For example, chapter 4 included descriptions about how the inclusionary practice of creating an inclusive mission and vision at EMS and CHS sustained the district's work supporting the scaling of the practice districtwide. Most importantly, to sustain a practice in general it must be referenced and used often to support fluency and understanding. Steve explained that "sustainability is achieved when there is a broad ownership of the work" (Steve, Interview 1). Meaning, no one person should hold all the knowledge and make all the decisions. Luna, a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist, added that sustainability is also about, "actively trying to create systems so that people are more empowered" (Luna, Interview 1). To support educator agency, Steve mentioned that "the biggest part of sustainability...is honoring the work of the people...and

involving them in that process...scaling will happen because they are involved” (Steve, Interview 1). Through data generation with inclusionary leaders at MRSD, it became apparent that sustainability should be driven through broad ownership, the establishment of systems that support and encourage broad ownership, and time to praise all the staff hard work that may be both seen and unseen. Broad ownership ensures that staff at all levels have ownership over decision making and shared responsibility to shape solutions to problems.

While one person can start an initiative and build excitement and momentum in a district, like Steve, Neil, and others from chapter 4, knowledge, language, skills, and beliefs must permeate through a district culture to support sustainability. Neil emphasized this sentiment stating:

My entire leadership philosophy has been to create sustainability. I want this place to run without me...That's why we have so many teacher leaders and different staff members that are leading things. It's the only way to make sure it doesn't die...otherwise you're not leading (Neil, Interview 1).

Like Steve, Neil's recognition that the role of a building leader is to create opportunities for staff to be involved in the work so that it sustains is one reason why their schools have been models for inclusionary practices work in the district for many years. With focus on sustainability, they involve many partners in school decision making. In addition, one of the main ways Steve, Neil, and the other participants in this study lead is through a student-centered mindset. Leveraging a student-centered mindset means the needs of the most vulnerable populations are considered over the needs of adults coming first or perpetuating other outdated and ableist systems and structures. The first sustainability theme is student-centered structures.

Student-Centered Structures

Participants frequently discussed the culture shift required regarding decision making and the importance of reflecting on who those decisions served or benefited. To support the use of sustainable practices for students with ESN, inclusionary practices that were structured to center the needs of students with ESN best supported sustainability for students with ESN. These student-centered structures were deeply rooted in connection and belonging. Bader, a general education teacher, expressed the interconnectedness between belonging and achievement stating:

If we are expecting them to achieve something before they feel like they belong and if they don't feel like they belong they are not going to get there...if you can create a culture where you are constantly pointing out the strengths you see in your students, I feel like that opens a door and welcomes people to the table (Bader, Interview 1).

Bader describes the importance of centering belonging to support achievement, while highlighting the strengths-based mindset that is needed to center the needs of students. Some specific student-centered inclusive practices used by educators at MRSD include (a) the importance of establishing an inclusive building schedule, (b) creating inclusive Individualized Education Plans (IEPS), and (c) school building plans that support flexible delivery of services. These specific practices help to lay the foundation for support needed to sustain the inclusion of students with ESN in general education settings.

Inclusive Building Schedule

Establishing an inclusive building schedule is very important to the sustainability of structures and systems that support the inclusion of students with ESN. For administrative teams that create inclusive building schedules at MRSD, the needs of their students with the most

complex needs were considered first, followed by thinking creatively about support schedules and services. Neil described their process:

When creating a schedule that is best for students, if there are competing priorities, decisions will be centered on student outcomes and the impact on our most vulnerable student populations. To support, maximize your FTE creating extra support and schedule for students that need it. Students will include challenging courses that are accessible to all students (Neil, Interview 1).

Neil's commitment to create a schedule that both meets student needs and keeps expectations high speaks to the “values and the priorities” (Neil, Artifact 2) of the building leadership team. In Neil's building, this is referred to as the “tights and looses” (Neil, Artifact 2). “Tights and looses” is the terminology used amongst administrators regarding commitment areas identified by the team that need to remain tight or strong during decision making versus commitments or spaces where they might have some wiggle room in decision making.

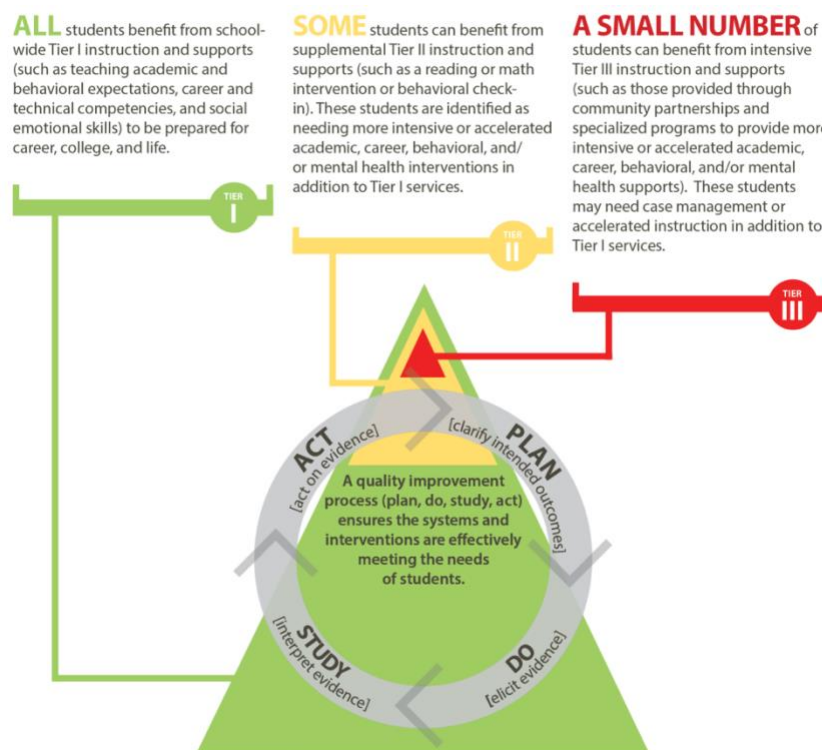
Steve indicated that when collaborating with his team around the building schedule each year they, “take an appreciative inquiry stance whereby we have permission to dream and design a better future for our students” (Steve, Interview 1). Furthermore, Steve added that it is important that when designing the schedule they “don't have to be perfect, we will learn by doing, and we fail forward because we see it as a learning opportunity” (Steve, Interview 2). This leadership mindset supports a culture where staff are praised for creative thinking, a willingness to try new things, and to embrace the vulnerability of the process. Bader reflected on the process stating:

We are so often plagued by our own insecurities, and we feel like we don't want to take chances and risks...all of this is vulnerable and so opening that door to it creates a safe

space for people that makes them feel comfortable is super important (Bader, Interview 1).

These quotes illustrate how MRSD uses inclusive building schedules that center the needs of students first and foremost, but that staff also recognize the creativity needed to address student needs and sustain the inclusive building schedule over the years.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Part of building inclusive schedules included creative implementation of MTSS structures. Dosie, a district administrator, shared a visual displaying these structures (see Figure 14, Dosie, Observation 1, Artifact 17), that was presented in a principal leadership meeting. This image was accompanied by professional development on the three tiers of MTSS. The goal of this professional development was to support increased understanding amongst building leaders regarding instructional tiers and how they could be incorporated into inclusive building schedules. For students with ESN, this image and the coaching around its implementation sought to establish norms and a greater understanding that all students, regardless of ability, should receive tier 1 instruction with embedded support. The professional development emphasized that any additional support provided from tiers 2 and 3 should be in addition to receiving tier 1 instruction, not replacing tier 1 instruction. More specifically, this observation with Dosie highlighted MRSD's emphasis that all students, especially students with ESN should be accessing grade level instruction. The district was continually emphasizing that students should not be pulled out of class or provided with separate programming/services that would prevent them from receiving tier 1 instruction first. This level of alignment between building leaders supported sustainability of the practice as well as scale.

Figure 14*MTSS Tiers Artifact Presented to Building Leaders*

Note. This image illustrates and describes the MTSS tiers as presented to MRSD building leaders to support the creation of inclusive building schedules that flexibility include all three tiers of MTSS. Image copied from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) MTSS Guidance (OSPI, 2017).

At the secondary level, informal conversations with Neil at CHS included brainstorming an inclusive building schedule that planned for all three tiers of MTSS. This involved first moving to a six-period day to reduce student courseload and to co-teach as many classes as possible. This shift not only supported many students with and without disabilities, but it provided greater access for students with ESN to attend general education classes if they required support because the special education teachers could provide direct academic and non-academic support. From a technical standpoint this looked like students with ESN being scheduled into

classes before the rest of the student body. Students were placed into classes that fit their specific strengths and goal areas rather than having placement in general education classes be an afterthought. This contrasted the previous approach which included placing students with ESN in all special education courses and then adding them into whatever elective class has space, which was often general education PE. Additionally, to support implementation of both tier 2 and tier 3 instruction, CHS and EMS created “Challenger/Explorer time”, which ensured the whole school received enrichment and/or remediation at the same time. During Challenger/Explore time some students reported to a homeroom teacher and then dispersed to other classrooms to get acceleration on a topic or content area of interest or reported to a teacher to get extra practice and support on a specific assignment or project. This provided opportunities for students with ESN and beyond to attend both grade level core content instruction and to have other dedicated time for additional help that supported tier 2 and tier 3 levels of service delivery.

At the elementary level, building schedules at MRSD began to be more intentionally designed regarding when each grade level was teaching core content areas like literacy and math. This supported increased collaboration around instruction as well as reinforced the expectation that students would not be pulled from general education when core content was being taught. Logistically, instead of students with ESN being assigned to an ESN specific life skills class taught by a special education teacher, they were assigned to and put on a roster for a grade level general education classroom. This created the expectation that students with ESN did not have to request permission to be part of their grade level community, instead they were given rightful access to the space. As a result, students with ESN became part of the classroom community with a desk, seat, name tag, and other materials that physically showed them being invited and welcomed in the space. Bader, reflected on her experience working with students with ESN in

interview 1 stating, “it shouldn't even be debated, who you get, you take everybody.” Bader’s reaction speaks to the years when students with ESN were not welcome or allowed to be part of her general education classes and how the inclusive building schedule was a huge support in removing barriers to entry.

MRSD’s move to align core content across grade levels and not allow students to be pulled during that time demonstrated their commitment to the students who had been historically barred from grade level instruction and forced into remediation only classes. Carla, a special education teacher, stated in interview 1 that historically schools, “were not built for kids with disabilities to begin with, but they were really explicitly not built for kids of color.” In this quote Carla is referencing the inequities in education and how students with disabilities, like students of Color, had experiences with exclusion from schools. For students with ESN, this involved being pulled from core content instruction and placed in special education classes where they missed out on grade level instruction, resulting in widening achievement gaps. Furthermore, Molly, a general education teacher, stated:

They [students with ESN] are capable of so much more, like they really are. And I think that by giving them that, you know, empowering them and the more exposure we can give them, especially these kiddos who aren't getting the exposure to language...just keep the bar high for them because they will reach it (Molly, Interview 2).

For Carla, Molly, and others, there was an awareness of systemic oppression in schools and how it often started with building schedules that were not set up for the needs of learners whose bodies and minds engage outside of normative expectations. Both Carla and Molly see the need to continue to advocate for populations of students with more extensive or complex support needs so that all students receive equitable access, are held to high expectations, and have

educators that believe they can achieve great things. While inclusive building schedules provided the new structure to support inclusion of students with ESN, the creation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to support flexible service delivery, allowed these practices to sustain.

Inclusive Individualized Education Plans (IEP)

Inclusive IEPs were another inclusive practice leveraged by educators at MRSD. Slightly different from typical IEPs, inclusive IEPs are designed using a strength based and person-centered approach. Inclusive IEPs involve first planning for a student's success in general education rather than making assumptions that they need a more restrictive placement based on their disability. Marie stated that inclusive IEPs seek to make the following questions clear:

How do we communicate about our students with parents and gened teachers? How do we communicate strengths? How do we communicate from a strengths-based lens? And then what does that do to our thinking so that we can make a goal make sense. How to move from deficit-based statements to this is who they are as a learner and then how can we build on that? (Marie, Interview 2).

In this way, IEPs at MRSD moved away from listing all the things a student can't do and aimed to disrupt deficit thinking about students and disability. Furthermore, an inclusive IEP presumes a student's competence and does not limit them based on any test score or diagnoses. Carla mentioned her struggle with reporting on test scores reflecting on a particular student in interview 2 stating, "she's the lowest percentile across the board for a lot of things, and that does not reflect her at all in the slightest." Instead, when writing inclusive IEPs, student strengths are at the forefront of documentation and teams prioritize what the student can do and how they learn the best (Luna, Observation 2, Artifact 11). Inclusive IEPs support the team in focusing on things that work well and building momentum in things that are successful for the student.

Additionally, Luna discussed the need for IEP goals to be written more inclusively with goals that support and encourage student voice, stating:

The last few years we were working a lot with our disproportionality, but also with our inclusionary practices because a lot of what we do with inclusion and belonging we want to be able to give the voice to the students, which means we're talking a lot about how do we bring in goals sooner where they work on self-advocacy, where they can learn how to talk about what their needs are (Luna, Interview 1).

The conversations Luna has been having with her fellow SLPs (Luna Observation 1, Artifact 14) and with the other collaborative teams she is part of not only support scaling of more person-centered goals for students, but they also shift the narrative regarding what goals are usually proposed by supporting transformative thinking. This ensures students with ESN are not relegated to IEP goals that do not maintain high expectations or endure IEP goals being continued over the years with no real rationale as to why. The person-centered practice of inclusive IEPs supports educators in being meaningful, transformational thinkers who presume student competence and model high expectations through the development of appropriately rigorous goals tied to grade level standards. At MRSD, this practice helps scale and sustain the wider inclusive mission and vision of the district.

Family and Community Partnerships. Planning for and implementing inclusive IEPs involves centering families as experts. Intentionally centering the voices of families takes more time, but facilitates a more strength based, collaborative, and comprehensive document. This ensures that the resulting IEP supports the student, the school team, and provides opportunities for greater alignment between home and school support. Marie indicated that one of the district practices they are working on is increasing family voices stating, “the more the parents and

guardians know the more they feel that they do have a voice as well and we can be better partners” (Marie, Interview 1). Ensuring this practice is scaled and sustained across the district necessitates coaching case managers on communication methods with families with students with ESN. Additionally, the district has taken on the duty to provide training to families regarding how to read and interpret IEPs and their legal rights. Figure 15 provides an image from the MRSD website advertising a workshop for families.

Figure 15

District IEP Parent & Family Engagement Meetings Flyer



Note. This image was copied from the MRSD website and provides families with a link for the days and times of the scheduled family meetings as well as other information. This graphic has been edited to de-identify the school.

Carla also emphasized the importance of communication with families as being paramount to supporting the unique needs of students with ESN. She noted in interview 2 that, “everyone has different communication styles and so I mirror the kind of communication style that the parent needs because that is the best way to build a good relationship, especially at the start.” Building in communication with the family from the start supports building the family up to center their voices in a system that has traditionally not provided them with time, access, or

comfort to do so. Cleo, parent of a child with ESN and a paraeducator in the district, reflected on her child's school journey and the trust that was built with all her child's teachers stating, "I really appreciated all of (M's) teachers, they have been very welcoming...and the feeling of creating a community" (Cleo, Interview 1). She explained how trust was built from the beginning through communication as well as the supportive community culture which supported her in feeling more confident to share her knowledge and expertise with the school team.

Furthermore, for students with ESN, the district encourages more frequent meetings than legally required. Marie stated in interview 1 that, "there is still an annual IEP, but for some of the more complex learners...we have them frequently...because let's see how the learner responds and then let's get back together and make adjustments if needed." This more frequent meeting schedule is another student-centered structure the district is making efforts to scale and sustain. The district emphasized that one meeting per year might be adequate for some students and families, but for students with ESN one meeting does not provide sufficient time for the collaboration needed to create the systems and structures for the student to belong and thrive. The more frequent meetings provided the team an opportunity to think creatively about goals, supports, and services that would best serve the strengths and needs of the student. It often also involved conversations around more flexible service delivery.

Flexible Service Delivery

Flexible service delivery describes how students with IEPs receive their special education service delivery minutes. In inclusive school communities, to provide flexible services requires an understanding of what the student needs to be successful and providing that education accordingly. For example, flexible service delivery for non-academic instruction at MRSD included a support plan that involved students with ESN working on transitions or independent

navigation of a building by attending a variety of different classes throughout their day rather than waiting until the end of the day to practice a few times in a self-contained setting. Thus, flexible service delivery is also more naturalistic. Academically speaking, flexible service delivery at MRSD also involved using planning time to adjust what accommodations, modifications, or other supports might be needed to access grade level instruction in the general education classroom. Bader indicated that:

Commitment is really every single kid comes into your classrooms and it's like, how do I make a connection? How do I shape this curriculum? How do I not only engage you, but engage you in a way that you are successfully making progress (Bader, Interview 1).

In this example Bader emphasizes that the first method of flexible service delivery is to make meaningful connections with the student. Carla elaborated and included an example using accommodations stating, "I don't need them to spend 20 minutes of their math test copying something, I can just give them that tool and then they can concentrate on the actual core learning of what we are trying to assess" (Carla, Interview 2). This example shows Carla's attention to the core content learning, essential standard, or learning objective and the support that could be provided to enhance the students' knowledge using preplanned and premade tools.

For MRSD the alignment of inclusive building schedules alongside the implementation of MTSS, inclusive IEPs that include strong family and community partnerships, and the flexible ways in which teams think about service delivery, supported the district's increased inclusion of students with ESN in core content area instruction. Part of the reason these practices were sustained for students with ESN were because of the collaborative systems in place at MRSD.

Collaborative Systems to Support Inclusive Instructional Strategies

After establishing student centered structures, MRSD needed to build collaborative systems to build the framework through which student-centered conversations could occur and to provide more creative and flexible methods of service delivery. At MRSD, participants reflected on the importance of maintaining commitments to a collaborative mindset for the sustainability of effective practices to support students with ESN. In interview 1 Steve indicated that his commitments are, “centered in curiosity, they are centered in collaboration, the sort of the action research that happens in collaboration, and they are really centered in the stories of kids.” Cleo stated that collaboration, “takes an entire group of people wanting to support that student in order for there to be that big shining moment at the end” (Cleo, Interview 1). Additionally, Neil stated that, “to support diverse populations we need to come together to leverage the skill set of the building via collaboration” (Neil, Interview 1). Bader reflected on the value of collaboration stating:

I think it is just amazing that we have this staff that comes together all around these kids.

It's not about what your role is or your position or your title, it's that we are here to help kids. This is fluidity...and we are all part of that (Bader, Focus Group Interview).

These participants' quotes speak to the interwoven nature of collaboration and that way it involves all individuals in the building. One powerful practice that supports the sustainability of meaningful instruction for students with ESN in general education is the inclusionary practice of co-planning.

Co-Planning Practices and Norms

However strong collaborative commitments are, an inclusive building schedule that centers the needs of all students must provide structured opportunities for collaboration to occur

and sustain through protected time. Steve stated during observation 2 that, "we schedule teachers so that there are daily, weekly, and monthly opportunities for collaboration." Weekly and/or daily collaborative opportunities often occur in elementary and secondary settings through the alignment of grade level or content area prep periods. This enables teachers teaching the same content or co-teaching in the same class the ability to come together on a regular basis to share student updates or other pieces of information that might impact the planned lesson of the day. Molly indicated in interview 1 that, "if you build those relationships with your colleagues, you know who you can go to, bounce ideas off, and be a sounding board and help those kiddos develop systems that work." The combination of time to plan, but time to also build relationships supported fluency in planning as well as an increase in strengths-based instruction. These conversations around "finding the kids strengths" were also supportive of finding creative and flexible ways to provide specific instruction to support students with challenging behaviors (Molly, Interview 2).

Co-planning time in MRSD is protected via the building schedule either before or after school (elementary) or during an aligned prep period (secondary). While teachers might have the opportunity to meet daily, lesson planning usually occurred weekly on a designated day. When teams meet, general education teachers, special education teacher(s), and sometimes related support providers (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, behavior analyst, etc.) map out the lessons for the week and define any roles and responsibilities during instruction. They also have a post-planning meeting regarding the creation of any educational materials. Steve emphasized during observation 2, that for collaboration to be successful, it needs to start with "a shared commitment to be in the messy work together." Bader added that part of engaging in the messy work is also the "commitment that we are going to celebrate each other and that is going

to be a part of who we are culturally...and the admin has done a really good job in fostering that” (Bader, Interview 1). The commitments to be positive, celebratory, vulnerable, and engage in the messy work together are what created the practices and norms for teams to operate from. To support co-planning and collaboration teams at MRSD are also involved in creating tools to support organizational processes.

Once structures were in place that provided opportunities for collaboration, collaborative tools were another inclusionary practice that supported the provision of expectations around roles and responsibilities, essential standards, scaffolds, and assessments. Steve explained that “we were able to develop very concrete tools and materials and scaffolds for kids...and a framework that it's anchored to and it fits within the larger process we are asking our collaborative teams to do” (Steve, Focus Group Interview). These tools support the structure necessary for high quality and efficient collaboration and support the co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessment opportunities the secondary schools at MRSD are adapting. During observation 1 for Bader, the EMS’s co-planning tool was provided as artifact 12 (full version found in Appendix V). Figure 16 below provides an image of the top part of the first page of the co-planning tool. The co-planning tool created by the EMS team supports the sustainability of their mission and vision as well as sustainability of shared ownership for inclusive practices because it includes clear norms and protocols and guiding questions to support decision making. Part of the success of this document is that this was collaboratively created. Cleo stated during interview 2 that, “I think that when people take ownership of something then they are more likely to continue it.”

Figure 16*Exploration Middle School Co-Planning Tool (Part 1)*

Mission and Vision	
Our Purpose at [REDACTED] is to ensure that ALL students learn the essential academic, social, and citizenship skills to be successful in middle school and beyond.	All Means All! At [REDACTED] the needs of the student come first; we will meet those needs through unsurpassed collaboration; no one is big enough to work independently of others; the combined wisdom of one's peers is greater than any individual; and we will use a teamwork approach, share our insights, and take a continuous interest in each other's growth.
Decision-Making	
• What do students need in this specific situation? • What data is driving this decision (standards, student data, evidence-based, understanding of rigor levels)? • What is the impact (who and what, positive and possible harm)? • What is the actionable step we can take within what we can control? • Check-in on the team: What are the polarities? Have all been heard? Have all been respected?	
Norms and Protocols: Team Commitments for Engaging the Work	
1. Control what we can 2. Show up on time, with materials ready 3. Provide opportunity for each member's input (finger signal to speak) 4. Assume positive intentions 5. Stick to the agenda 6. Fist to five for consensus	

Note. This image taken from the EMS co-planning tool shows the mission/vision, purpose, norms/protocols, and guiding decision-making questions.

The decision-making questions on the co-planning document were referenced by Carla as being important because they provide a structure to continue to support student centered planning and instruction. Carla reflected on her commitments stating, “I am just really passionate about making it a good experience for all my students and knowing that each layer adds another aspect of making it harder for them both, not just in school, but it starts in school” (Carla, Interview 1). In Carla’s reflection on how the equity and decision-making questions in the document can support diverse populations, she mentioned “layers”. For Carla, this referred to the multiple identities individuals might have such as being a person of color as well as being a person with a disability. The questions on the co-planning document provide the team with anchor questions to reference as they move through the planning processes.

To support co-planning and co-assessment, Bader and Carla referenced the second part of the co-planning tool (Bader, Artifact 12) to support the collaboration required of secondary teams that are involved in co-teaching and co-assessment. Figure 17 of the collaborative co-planning tool for middle school provided an outline for teams to map out weekly learning targets, co-teach models to be used, and identify what supports might be needed. The discussion of supports includes what teachers need to effectively teach a lesson such as delineation of tasks during instruction as well as the supports (e.g., accommodations and modifications) students with IEPs may require. The learning target on the co-planning tool provides a starting point to support teams in determining how to tie the learning target to specific IEP goals and instruction for students with ESN. The delivery of the instruction section includes conversation prompts focused on the models of co-teaching and the role of each adult in the room. Once learning targets and co-teaching structures are established, teams discuss what accommodations, modifications, and other structural supports might be needed through the lens of specific instructional strategies (e.g., direct instruction, peer supports, or modeling) to support students with ESN.

Figure 17*Exploration Middle School Co-Planning Tool (Part 2)*

Previewing next week's activities - week at a glance						
What structure/co-teaching moves need to be made?						
10:30-10:45	15	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		Learning Target: Entry: Lesson: Practice: Exit:	Learning Target: Entry: Lesson: Practice: Exit:	Learning Target: Entry: Lesson: Practice: Exit:	Learning Target: Entry: Lesson: Practice: Exit:	Learning Target: Entry: Lesson: Practice: Exit:
		Co-teaching structures:	Co-teaching structures:	Co-teaching structures:	Co-teaching structures:	Co-teaching structures:
What accommodations/supports are needed for each activity?						
10:45-10:55	10	Entry Tasks	Lessons	Practices	Exits	Misc./Extend

Note. This image taken from the EMS co-planning tool shows an abbreviated planning structure to support co-teaching and accommodations/modification supports.

Engagement in this type of detailed planning not only provides teams with entry points to support the learning for students with ESN, but it also supports the team in understanding students' strengths and areas of growth. During interview 1 Molly indicated that, "I think first of all getting to know them has been the biggest piece of planning I have done to support them...like building relationships with them...figuring out what triggers them and then providing the support." To do this, teams work to create lessons that are engaging, allow for multiple means of communication, and are accessible in ways that support interdependence and self-determination in students with ESN.

Engagement. Molly reflected on the importance of engagement and discussed how she did that in her transitional kindergarten class stating that firstly, she works to “make the learning and the classroom environment theirs” (Molly, Interview 1). This act of creating student ownership in their classrooms supports a base level of student engagement. Molly also added during interview 1 that, “bringing in books not only supports the learning that I am hoping to get the students engaged in...then also holding onto the students’ own interests, talents, and capabilities and really highlighting those.” In this quote, Molly describes how using the physical books fosters engagement because books can be fun for some students to hold and interact with, but they also are aligned with what she knows about student interests, strengths, and preferences. Additionally, Cleo recalled a time in her target student’s general education English class when the teacher utilized engagement strategies to create a supportive environment where the student was invested in the learning and thrived. Cleo stated:

He loves to read. He loves to be the start of the show. He loves to be the one called on if he knows what to do and if he knows what to say and then the first few times...students would clap for him spontaneously and so I think it really encouraged him to keep reading. I think they could see how challenging it was for him, but he was willing (Cleo, Interview 1).

While both Molly and Cleo reference engagement strategies, neither specifically articulated doing so as part of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (CAST, 2018). Bader, however, references the UDL framework citing voice and choice as one of the strategies she uses to support increased engagement for a student with ESN in her 6th grade English class. In interview 2, Bader reflected on her lesson that was observed for observation 2 stating that she

gave the class the choice to write down what they did that weekend instead of answering the provided prompt. Bader described the student's engagement:

All of a sudden she's super engaged, and she's like writing ideas down on her own, and she's taking in information and summarizing it and doing all these skills that we have been trying to get her to do with content she could care less about. And so I think finding things kids love to learn about is a huge part of just giving them that choice in UDL that helps them advance further (Bader, Interview 2).

In Bader's example, the option to provide choice regarding the writing topic of the day not only supported the student with ESN, but the whole class. For the target student with ESN, this inclusionary practice provided the opportunity for increased engagement, and the student was able to independently participate in the learning.

Communication. To further the inclusion of students with ESN in general education, participants also implemented specific communication measures to increase participation. For example, many students in the MRSD utilize augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods including the use of electronic devices such as tablets with picture communication software. Luna reflected on the historical exclusion of students with ESN that use communication devices stating:

It was really hard at first because everybody was excluded, and so it was a lot of trying to fight for kids to get included and a lot of working towards how we honor and support communication. These are the steps we need to do building the AAC knowledge and building access to AAC because not many students had devices in the building and then trying to build it started with SLC and the goal was to expand out into other settings (Luna, Interview 1).

Luna's statement reflects how she and her colleagues have intentionally supported the inclusion of students with ESN with and without communication devices. It also emphasizes the professional development, coaching, and modeling that has gone into supporting the increased use of communication devices. The establishment of the AAC specialist position created by the district supported further scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices. This position gave Luna the time to coach up teams throughout the district on how to include AAC devices into instruction. This also included implementing coaching with families.

While Luna reflected on the coaching she and her colleagues were providing, Bader reflected on how she initially thought about supporting different communication methods in her instruction for students with ESN. Bader stated that her first concern was to, "preserve competence and thinking back to belong through preserving that dignity" (Bader, Interview 1). This sentiment reflects the professional development the district provided in collaboration with university partners in August and January focused on supporting belonging through building cultures of dignity. The professional development included discussion of how to effectively create meaningful opportunities for communication both socially with peers as well as connected to instruction. For Bader, her work to support communication began with intentional whole class/peer communication and facilitation. Cleo reflected on a day she walked into Bader's general education classroom with a student who was not her usual focal student with ESN stating:

I walked in the room with (E) the whole class stopped for a moment and said hello to him. It only took 10 seconds, and the teacher led that. It was lovely and felt so inclusive. They said hello to him, there were students at his table, and they were doing work where they moved around the classroom from table to table, and they would talk. The kids

would talk to him and it was a topic about zoos...I was just feeling so proud that we got here today and he's needed (Cleo, Interview 2).

The intentional practice of adult modeling with peers to understand and develop comfort with their fellow peer using AAC was one way Bader supported the inclusion of students with ESN. It also reflected Bader and the district's commitment to supporting belonging. In addition to intentional planning for engagement and communication, the educators also described their focus on creating accessible materials to support students with ESN in general education.

Accessibility. To ensure accessibility of grade level content, staff at MRSD implement modifications and accommodations to support students with ESN. This includes leveraging other tools to support engagement and communication. Cleo shared in interview 1 how modifying materials could create that “just right level” of work for students while also maintaining high expectations which increases their self-determination and independence. Cleo further explained how one general education teacher went about creating accessible materials for a student she supported stating:

He gave the same style of reading worksheet every week...new passage, but same format. The student highlights the key words, defines the key words, answers multiple choice questions, and then listens to the teacher read the passage...the whole thing is very repetitive...but for the student this structure and knowing what to expect is supportive (Cleo, Interview 2).

This example shows a commitment on behalf of the teacher to create a routine and structure that is more conducive to the students' strengths, thereby increasing his access to general education content and opportunities for conversation about content with his peers.

Inspired by the structures implemented in English class, Cleo shared two artifacts from math (Artifact 10). Figure 18 displays two examples of math assignments created for a student with ESN in 8th grade math. The left side of the first artifact (Figure 18) features a worksheet that Cleo designed from observation 2. The example leveraged instructional strategies modeled in English class which included a directions checklist and a space for the student to record their thoughts. Following the experimental implementation of the worksheet, Cleo informally reported that she shared her example worksheet and celebrations with the math teacher. The next day the math teacher provided the student with the modified assignment for the student to complete as seen on the right side of Figure 18.

Figure 18

Modified 8th Grade Math Assignments for Student with ESN in General Education

SCAVENGER HUNT

- ☒ Find the numbers 5 x
- ☒ Find the letters x
- ☒ Find the symbols - =

AWESOME JOB! TIME TO SOLVE!

- ☒ Step 1 - ~~circle~~ the numbers
- ☒ Step 2 - draw the line down the equals sign
- ☒ Step 3 - find the invisible 1
- ☒ Step 4 - make the numbers + solve

① $5 - x = 8$

② $-5 \quad -5$

$-x = 8 - 5$

$-x = 3$

$-1 \quad -1$

$x = -3$

Function Machine Mystery Challenge

Name: _____ Date: _____

Challenge 1: Find the Output

Input	Mystery Function	Output
5	+5	
7	+5	
8	+5	
10	+5	

Challenge 2: Find the Rule

Input	Mystery Function	Output
4		10
6		12
8		14

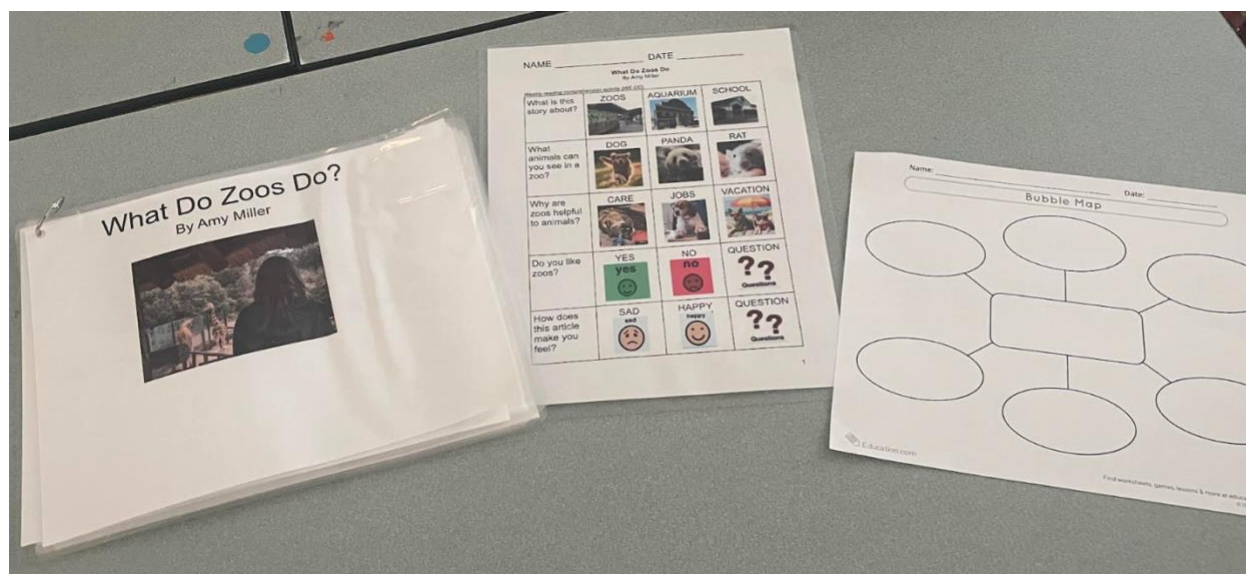
Note. This figure shows two images side by side featuring two ways a student with ESN was able to directly access the core curriculum through collaborative partnerships.

This impromptu collaboration was a direct result of ideas being shared across content areas and the desire of various team members to share with each other to support students.

Another example of modified materials that included elements of engagement, communication, and accessibility is showcased in Figure 19. The image in Figure 19 was taken during Bader's observation 2, which was a 6th grade general education English lesson about the purpose or role of zoos. The figure provides an example of the accommodated and modified work created to support a student with ESN in the student's grade level general education English class. The left side displays a laminated and bound modified story about zoos that the class was reading. The middle of the picture displays reading comprehension questions where the student could circle, touch, or indicate their answer as well as cut/glue pages as an assessment or additional learning activity. The right side of the picture displays a student bubble map to support idea generation and conversation with classmates via the student's augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. All materials were provided as a packet of artifacts (Bader, Artifact 13).

Figure 19

Modified 6th Grade English Materials for Student with ESN in General Education



Note. This image shows the modified work for a student with ESN in a 6th grade general education English class.

All three of these assignments, when provided together, illustrate staff's use of a Universal Design for Learning framework to guide instructional design. Educators supported engagement through the intentional selection of the zoo article knowing the student loves animals. Varied ways of representation were attended to through the multiple ways the student could access the learning via the laminated book and the online book version. And finally, multiple means of expression was supported through the multiple ways the student could communicate their responses to the learning via pointing, circling, or using AAC and use a scribe to record thoughts in the bubble map. This example provides an excellent visual representation regarding how one teacher collaborated with her team to support the inclusion of a student with ESN in general education in a meaningful way that presumed competence and maintained high expectations.

Increasing Depth of Knowledge

While the participants in this study highlighted many strategic and innovative efforts to scale and sustain inclusionary practices for students with extensive support needs, the depth of knowledge around how to support students with ESN in inclusive settings and what specific practices to use remained limited. The study findings indicated that while all participants had a willingness and commitment to work with students with ESN it was often challenging for participants to clearly communicate what specific inclusive practices they were using to support students with ESN. Participants recognized this as a growth area and during recruitment many participants expressed interest in being part of the study because they acknowledged that they may receive intentional coaching and instructional support from myself as part of their participation. This indicated that they found it hard to conceptualize their needs related to supporting students with ESN and did not know what questions to ask to improve their practice. Furthermore, many participants were either unfamiliar with inclusionary practice terminology such as UDL, or they lacked the knowledge regarding how to leverage the practice to support a more complex learner. Following observations and interviews participants often asked for explicit feedback about their lessons or planning sessions to extend their learning. Following these brief coaching sessions, participants seemed to seem more comfortable including students with ESN or sharing how they discussed student needs via advocacy efforts with their colleagues.

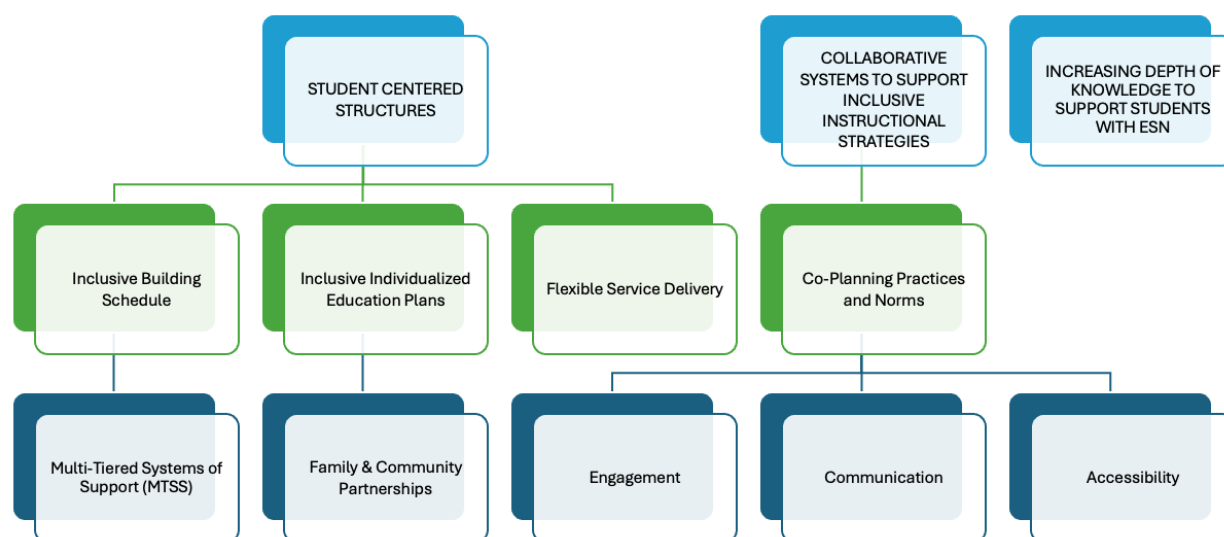
Conclusion

The findings from this chapter showcase the importance of collaborative, student-centered structures and commitments that support inclusive instructional strategies for all students, but especially for students with ESN in general education. Commitments to student

centered structures helped to create the systems and structures that allowed the participating educators at MRSD time and capacity to think critically and flexibly to support learners with ESN. The inclusive building schedule set up the structure for student IEP services to be fulfilled in flexible ways that prioritized students over teachers and the establishment of collaborative cultures such as protecting time for collaboration set the stage for collaborative practices such as prioritizing engagement, communication, and accessibility in lesson design. These structures supported MRSD in scaling inclusionary practices to support other students, grade levels, and teams, in addition to students with ESN. Figure 20 provides a visual representation of the findings for this chapter.

Figure 20

Inclusionary Practice Leaders Scaling and Sustaining in their Contexts Findings



Note. This figure describes findings to this chapter regarding the district vision for scale statement.

In closing, Cleo stated that, “sometimes things work out kind of just by luck and sometimes you work to create that luck (Cleo, Interview 1).” In this quote, Cleo acknowledges how sometimes things can just fall into place, but more often than not early committed efforts

will further the likelihood of future successes and/or luck. MRSD's early efforts focused on belonging supported their ability to scale inclusionary practices more broadly across the district. Throughout data collection, the educators in this study shared how these early efforts contributed to their later successes. Neil reflected on his most recent data dive, where he noted positive trends in academic results and positive trends on student reports about belonging. He shared, "this was, like, my moment when I was like, this is this works, and nobody can ever tell me again that this won't work (Neil, Interview 2)."

Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

Discussion

To effectively support students with extensive support needs (ESN) in general education, a long-term vision for teacher preparation is required to instruct teachers how to effectively implement specific practices in general education (Ruppar, Roberts, Olson, 2018). Furthermore, this long-term plan should include support to address beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions that can shape future decisions and their development as teacher leaders (Olson & Roberts, 2018a). As such, attitudes and dispositions regarding students with ESN and their inclusion into general education relies heavily on teacher mindset requiring a shift in philosophy and practice so that all learners have access to places and spaces in their communities where they can belong and thrive (Baglieri et al., 2011b). The commitment to an inclusive mindset involves extensive observation of the occurrence of inequitable practices, strong leaders that find flexible and creative solutions to dismantle inequitable practices, and the commitment to remain open and vulnerable to new learning.

To help support the creation of inclusive schools and districts this study intentionally centered learners with extensive support needs (ESN) who are most often left out of conversations about inclusion, the most likely to be removed from general education, and the least likely to have opportunities to learn in the general education curriculum (Taub et al., 2017). Chapters 4 and 5 provided findings related to two research questions: (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN? And (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Findings from this study respond to the call to action from Baglieri et al. (2011a) to invite a greater plurality of perspectives about the nature of disability and recognize the profound implications it raises for future inclusive educational research to support transformational change in education. For students with ESN, the findings from this study illustrate how the existence of universal best practices that support inclusion are not sufficient. For districts to ensure their inclusive commitments extend to learners with ESN, educators need to engage in regular and specific conversations specifically focused on students with ESN and to see themselves as having a role in their inclusion, regardless of their background and expertise. Districts should not assume that effective practices or policies will generalize to all learners, especially learners with ESN. Findings presented in chapters 4 and 5 seek to extend the literature as they demonstrated: (1) inclusive practices that support students with ESN support the whole schools; (2) specific systems, structures, and processes that can be used to scale and sustain inclusive education/inclusionary practices; (3) the necessity of innovative leaders for transformative change; and (4) inclusive schools can thrive even in districts that are siloed.

Practices that Support Students with ESN Often Support the Whole

Findings from this study indicated specific inclusive instructional practices that were supportive of students with ESN learning in the classroom, but also specific inclusionary practices that support growth and systems change in a district. The participants in the study shared in various ways the impact inclusionary practices had on students with ESN. This aligns with recent research from Gee et al., (2020) that indicates when students with ESN were included in general education classes they improved in literacy, math, and communication, while their peers with ESN being educated in segregated classrooms made no progress. Furthermore, just the mere act of being part of general education classes increases the likelihood students will

receive instruction on grade level standards (Kleinert, 2020) rather than the skills-based instruction seen in special education classrooms or through replacement, modified, or alternate curriculums (Taub et al., 2019a; Taub et al., 2019b). Participants in this study discussed how this was true for learners with ESN in their districts, particularly when they prioritized general education placements and course membership in scheduling conversations.

Once students with ESN had access to general education classes at MRSD, the inclusionary leaders had to ensure the content was accessible. To ensure students with ESN can properly access learning in general education about core content, they benefit from individualized supports and services which can include embedded systematic instruction, curriculum modifications, communication supports, and environmental accommodations (Kuntz & Carter, 2019). Participants described the specific instructional methods of engagement, communication, and accessibility as ways participants were intentionally designing instruction to increase meaningful access and participation of students with ESN in general education. Even though most participants did not explicitly name their use of UDL to support engagement, their practice reflect recommendations in the research related to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, a known inclusive practice supportive of all students (Cook & Rao, 2018). Although UDL is under researched when it comes to students with ESN, it was supportive in helping MRSD educators make instruction more personally relevant, engaging (Trela & Jimenez, 2013) and strengths based (Baglieri et al., 2011; Johnson et al, 2023) for all learners. This framework supported creating increased interest and engagement for students with ESN as well as with many other members of the classroom community.

Second, Deliso and Bukaty (2019) state that blending Assistive Technology (AT) tools with the UDL principles can enrich instruction for students with Augmentative and Alternative

Communication (AAC) needs because the collaboration to support blending strategies offered further choice and flexibility. The educators at MRSD provided evidence of this by using low tech tools (e.g., pencil grips, graphic organizers, sentence starters, drawing, gesturing) and high-tech tools (i.e., iPad or a tablet with speech generating voice software, text to speech software) to support learners with ESN. Thinking intentionally about preferred methods of communication for students with ESN also supported educators in providing other students with different response strategies.

Third, the practice of making materials accessible supported educators in combining engagement and communication preferences with deep conversations about specific accommodations and modifications to support students with ESN and the rest of the classroom community. This reflects research literature by Ruhter (2022) that describes how the UDL framework can be leveraged to support students with ESN through inquiry-based science instruction in general education. Ruhter (2022) proposes a six step process designed to support students with ESN stating: (1) teams must determine learning objectives, (2) engage to promote interest, (3) provide opportunities for exploration, (4) opportunity to explain concepts and definitions, (5) elaborate on prior knowledge to make a prediction, and (6) evaluate for checks of understanding. This framework provides differentiated instruction through differentiated materials while maintaining high expectations for all students (Agran et al., 2020). MRSD's work designing and implementing inclusive general education content for students with ESN reflects some of the best practices in this area of research.

Systems, Structures, and Processes to Scale and Sustain

The findings from this study illustrated how the establishment of systems, structures, and processes helped to lay the groundwork required to bring together interdisciplinary teams to

create consistent opportunities for collaboration. This aligns with previous research by Giangreco and Suter (2015) indicating that explicit frameworks are necessary for individuals to sustain and scale inclusive practices in ways that are flexible and uphold accountability. Additionally, when done well, these systems and structures can improve, “the consistency, and integrity of supports” (Giangreco & Suter, 2015, p. 127). Furthermore, to ensure that these practices sustain they should be made collaboratively, be grounded in shared values, and be subject to ongoing data collection to ensure effectiveness of decision making (Giangreco & Suter, 2015). MRSD’s efforts related to shared vision and mission statement reflects these recommendations.

MRSD’s creation of interdisciplinary teams to assist in creating systems, structures, and processes that dedicate time to collaboration also aligns with literature from Ishimaru (2019) documenting the importance of collective membership. Collective membership is important in supporting the creation of cultures of belonging where diverse members are valued for their expertise and problem-solving abilities. In an effort to reimagine how schools can be more equitable, Ishimaru (2019) provides a co-design framework organized around the steps required to build teams such as: (1) tapping into collective leadership with families, (2) engaging in work that recognizes the histories and patterns of systemic inequities, and (3) ensure that capacity and flexibility exist to support sustainability. This emphasis on collective membership, collaboration via an equity lens, and sustainability measures provides balance for schools in siloed systems to transform and thrive. MRSD’s efforts to build greater opportunities for families to meaningfully engage during the development of the district strategic plan as well as through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) process reflects these best practices.

Furthermore, to support the creation of systems, structures, and processes needed to scale and sustain inclusionary practices many of MRSD’s inclusionary practice leaders leveraged a

lens of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) describe Appreciative Inquiry as an inquiry-based measure that draws upon action-based research and organizational developmental methods to integrate philosophy, theory, practice, and research to bring people together to develop shared visions and action plans. The Appreciative Inquiry process includes five stages or cycles (5-D Process) which brings people together to Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and establish a Destiny towards what will be (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). By uniting theory and practice, this collaborative process supports a shift away from changing people, as well as a shift away from deficit-minded fixations of barriers, but rather towards visioning a new future that is inclusive of all. The specific schools of EMS and CHS exemplified this inquiry-based measure through their use of positive, appreciative, and strengths-based thinking as they created systems that scaled and sustained in their buildings through the implementation of mission and vision statements, inclusive building schedules, and specific planning tools.

Inclusionary Schools in Siloed Systems can Thrive

Findings from this study also indicate that while district involvement is paramount to scale inclusive practices district wide, inclusionary schools such as EMS and CHS, can still thrive in siloed systems, while they continue to push for broader systems change. This challenges and supports past literature from Shogren et al. (2015) which states that support from central or district leadership (i.e., supervisory leaders) is important for schools to build inclusive school cultures without having to find “work arounds” to inequitable district policies and procedures (Shogren et al., 2015, p. 180). While district level support makes things easier, based on the findings of this study, I argue that schools can become inclusive without district oversight, support, or the stressors to find “work arounds” to district policies. Rather, they can leverage an

appreciative inquiry lens (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) or mindset discussed by Shogren et al. (2015) as, “the best of what is”, which can support the implementation of early efforts to implement inclusive school reform.

Through collaboration and collective effort in the inclusive schools at MRSD, study participants developed a mindset that they were better together and were empowered to continue their journey modeling their transformative approaches for their fellow peers and district leaders (Shogren et al., 2015). Furthermore, the facilitation of a common vision increased the degree through which individuals within the system shared ownership of change efforts around supporting student belonging and beyond (Agran, 2020). Of additional importance, the Shogren et al. (2015) study suggests that innovative schools that scale and sustain inclusive practices do so through organizational structures and intentional building of administrative leaders that enhance school culture through transformation.

Innovative Leaders are Necessary for Transformative Change

Finally, expanding on the referenced literature above regarding inclusive schools thriving despite lack of district support or oversight, the findings from this study also indicate the importance of strong leadership as necessary for transformative change efforts. While many participants in the study were not in formal leadership positions and did not hold an administrative credential, they demonstrated their leadership and agency through their engagement and commitments to dismantling structures that perpetuated segregation. Research has long established the importance of strong administrative leadership as a predictor for effective implementation of any initiative, but especially for inclusive school reform (Shogren et al., 2015). The findings from this study support research by Pedaste et al. (2021) which followed 706 school leaders and indicated that the vision of formal school leaders (i.e., credentialed

administrators) were the strongest predictor responsible for creating inclusive school cultures related to practice, differentiation, vision, and support. Pedaste et al. also highlighted the importance that leaders have in creating shared visions as the key to implement inclusive practices. In MRSD, this was evidenced by the efforts of Neil and Steve to create and implement the systems and structures needed to uphold a shared vision of inclusion for students with ESN.

Additionally, while administrative leadership is important to the success of inclusive schools, the importance of teacher leaders is also supported in the literature. In Ruppar et al. (2018), the researchers completed interviews about teacher expertise with a combination of teacher educators, school leaders, and special education teachers to explore the skills that could be developed over time and orientations that influenced teacher actions specific to supporting students with ESN. The authors identified five core practices to support students with ESN: “(a) advocacy; (b) systematic instruction; (c) strengths-based approach; (d) individualized instruction; and (e) collaboration” (Ruppar et al., 2018, p. 416). Regarding advocacy, the study “suggests that advocacy in teaching is characterized as actively supporting and using one's position to positively influence outcomes for students with ESN and their families” (Ruppar et al., 2018, p. 417). These findings suggest that anyone can become a teacher leader although the research also indicates that preparation and guidance is necessary to become creative and persistent problem solvers. Furthermore, research indicates that expert leaders are those that take active leadership roles to support the development and implementation of equitable structures (Ruppar et al., 2018). Additionally, through their engagement in creating systems that benefit all students, their advocacy affects a broad population of students rather than those just in their classes or on their caseload (Ruppar et al., 2018). The recruitment and interest of teacher leaders to be part of this study expansively supports this research as many participants expressed their willingness to

participate to continue to improve their practice in an effort to bring back new learning and ideas to support greater systems change.

Implications

The findings from this study provide several important implications regarding how to extend the current literature on ways to better support teachers to implement inclusionary practices for students with ESN in inclusive settings as well as how to support teams of educators coming together to collaborate in ways that meet the needs of learners with ESN. These findings suggest that to support students with ESN in inclusive settings, educators need direct teacher coaching on specific inclusive practices like the creation of modifications to support learners with ESN and ways to engage in collaboration focused on inclusive instructional planning.

Direct Teacher Instruction to Support Implementation of Inclusive Practices for Students with ESN

While this study included individuals who were operating in their specific roles with an inclusive mindset, many participants could not name specific inclusionary practices that were supportive of students with ESN, nor were they aware that some of the instructional techniques they had been using were inclusionary practices recommended in the literature. These connections only surfaced during data generation, when I asked them to provide explicit instructional examples during interviews and observations. To that end, some participants stated that their interest in participating in the study was to share their passion for supporting students with ESN, and to benefit from direct access to the researcher (myself) who could assist in furthering their knowledge around inclusion and inclusionary practices to support learners with ESN. These sentiments are supported by previous literature indicating that teachers report they

often do not know how to support the learning of students with ESN in inclusive settings (Matzen et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2013; Ruppert et al., 2011).

One specific support teachers may benefit from is focused professional development and coaching on inclusive and accessible curriculum design. This includes modifying grade level materials. In a study by Loyless et al. (2026), the authors provide step by step instruction regarding how to create adapted books to support grade level English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. Engaging in these types of modifications promotes equitable access to grade level instruction and allows students with ESN the opportunity for full participation in the general education classroom. To support this process, Loyless et al. (2026) propose a six step process to support this work: (1) preliminary planning, (2) getting to know the text, (3) collaboration to select themes and identify target vocabulary, (4) identify the key events, (5) writing the adapted text; and (6) adding in pictures with visuals (Loyless et al., 2022). Using these strategies provides the guidance for collaborative teams to come together to support access and targeted instruction for students with ESN in grade level content. Strong collaboration is required to support the planning needed to bring this strategy to fruition.

Collaborative Professional Development to Support Inclusive Instruction

In addition to direct instruction to implement specific inclusive practices, teachers also require collaborative professional development to support the scaling of inclusive instruction beyond their own classroom in students. Toews and Zagana (2022) define collaborative professional development (CPD) as having, “the potential to better support the implementation of inclusive practices, as educators may share their different areas of expertise by teaching each other their most impactful instructional strategies” (p.88). In their 2022 study the authors suggest that through collaboration special education teachers can share their expertise about

accommodating and supporting diverse student needs while the general education teacher can offer their content area instructional expertise (Toews & Zagona, 2022). Engagement in CPD provides a structure to support instructional planning for students with ESN by (1) identifying a targeted teaching strategy to be discussed, (2) engagement in learning about the targeted strategy, (3) practicing the targeted strategy or skill, and (4) engaging with colleagues around practiced-based feedback (Toews & Zagona, 2022). This collaborative model which includes learning-by-doing requires trust and vulnerability, a finding that participants in the current study emphasized. The participants' experiences at their schools in MRSD reflect how the "CPD cycle maximizes finds of knowledge already present on campus" which supports the building of positive and collaborative relationships (Toews & Zagona, 2022, p. 94) adding to the previously mentioned research regarding leveraging an appreciative inquiry mindset.

Throughout the duration of the study participants improved in their knowledge and understanding of inclusive practices, understanding of what specific practices were supportive of individuals with ESN, and ways they could implement them across contexts. By inviting participants to generate data for the study, I unintentionally provided them with spaces where they could reflect and ask direct questions about their practice to someone they deemed a specialist (me). This process illustrated the benefit of direct instruction and coaching and the importance of modeling to connect specific inclusionary practices to learners with ESN. This suggests that preservice educators need to have classes created in their programs or current classes that provide specific examples regarding how to apply inclusionary practices in instruction for students with ESN. For in-service teachers, direct coaching from inclusion specialists is necessary for inclusive leaders to grow in their understanding and practice (Toews et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Limitations

The chosen methodology and research design included various limitations. First, the decision to limit the study to a single case design rather than a multiple-case study design opens this single case approach to be potentially less compelling and/or less robust as it lacks the comparative element often leveraged in a multiple-case approach (Yin, 2018). Secondly, many participants within this study were engaging with inclusion and inclusionary practices at different phases, timelines, or approaches than their colleagues. This variance meant that some school sites were not actively engaging in inclusionary practices work which shaped claims about the focal district as a whole. Additionally, increased participation from teachers, staff, and families, would have allowed for greater plurality of perspectives. Finally, student voices are not represented in this study and family perspective/voice is limited. This indicates further need for research that includes the voices of students and families in research on inclusive practices (Connor et al., 2020).

Future Research

Future research on this topic should explore the effectiveness of coaching with teachers regarding how to implement practices such as UDL to support students with ESN in general education. This would include how teachers think about learning objectives and how flexible and creative thinking is used to create meaningful connection and engagement (Cook & Rao, 2018; Lowery et al., 2017) with general education curriculum. While this study did include findings pertaining to how teachers actively engaged students, involved assistive tech, honored communication preferences, and supported accessibility, more information is needed regarding implementation of specific practices for students with ESN.

An additional extension to this study would be to replicate it with other inclusive districts of various sizes to explore how they specifically scale and sustain these practices for students with ESN. Enacting a multiple case analysis approach across multiple districts would provide the comparative element absent from this study. Additionally, future research could extend opportunities for participants to gather information from more people involved, explore under what conditions, over what periods of time previous schools and districts have engaged in this work, and what their outcomes were related to district wide inclusive scaling (Agran et al., 2020). This level of study could provide helpful information for schools and districts interested in taking on this level of scaling work.

In closing, the findings of this study illustrate the need for strong commitments to create cultures of belonging and foster collaboration, and the importance of establishing clarity through shared systems and tools. Schools and districts that uphold these commitments provide adults and students with opportunities for meaningful engagement and intentionally scale and sustain these practices to support learners with ESN in general education. Transformational change based on social justice ideologies can be supportive of creating more supportive learning environments for all students and the findings from this study demonstrate how inclusive education can be leveraged as a means to achieve equity for all. Strong and innovative leaders at all levels of a system are required to implement the systems and structures necessary to create and sustain inclusive districts, schools, and practices (Pedaste et al., 2021; Ruppert et al., 2018). Finally, inclusion of individuals with ESN can no longer continue to be separate from district wide discussions related to inclusion. Defining inclusion as a moral imperative is one way to encourage educators to feel driven to embrace their strengths, to find their voice, and engage in

the necessary agency to deconstruct ableism and create communities that embrace differences
(Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

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Appendices

Appendix A: District Recruitment Invitation

Appendix B: District Inclusion Criteria Screener

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Appendix F: Individual Interview 1 Questions

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Appendix A

DISTRICT PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT INVITATION

To: <insert school district name here>

Attn: <insert district leadership contacts here>

Subject: UW Research Study

Hello!

My name is Christina Nowak Constantouros. I am a Doctoral Candidate in the College of Education's Special Education Department at the University of Washington.

I am writing this email to inquire about your potential participation in a qualitative research study. The purpose of this study is to understand how inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education understand and implement inclusionary practices in their contexts with a specific focus on learners with extensive support needs (ESN). Additionally, this study seeks to understand the visioning process inclusionary practice leaders engage in to focus decision making on scaling and sustaining inclusive education in their schools across the district. This study focuses specifically on districts who are actively engaged in inclusive practices work and include learners with ESN in their mission and visioning work. In this study, I am to explore the following research questions: (1) How do inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? (2) How do inclusionary practice leaders think about scaling inclusive practices district wide in ways that support learners with ESN?

I would like to set up a time to meet in person or virtually with a district representative to ask a few questions to determine if the district meets the inclusion/eligibility criteria for this study. Attached to this email you will find the District Inclusion Criteria Screener Questions (Appendix B) for reference.

If your district meets the inclusion/selection criteria and are interested in allowing this research to occur in your district, you will be asked to compile a list of inclusionary practice leaders (names and email addresses) from each site that are actively working to implement inclusionary practices in their contexts. We are looking for a diverse group of inclusionary practice leaders that includes: district administrators, building administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers (e.g. Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Vision Specialists), paraeducators, and family members.

Listed individuals will be contacted via email (see attached for appendix C - participant recruitment letter) and screened (see attached for appendix D - participant screener questions) to see if they meet the inclusion criteria of the study. Selected participants will be asked to participate in interviews, focus group conversations, observations, and provision of supporting artifacts. The interview commitment would include two individual interviews per participant (approx. 60 min each) and one focus group discussion (approx. 90 min). The observation commitment will consist of a minimum of two observations. Depending on your role, observations may consist of a classroom observation, observation of a collaborative planning session, any department, site, or district level strategic planning meetings, and other collaborative

meetings in line with the study purpose and research questions. Finally, participants will be asked to provide any artifacts, materials, or other resources to help provide context to observations and interview responses.

Once participants have been selected for the study and are interested in participating, they will be provided with a Participant Consent Form (see attached appendix E) to review and sign that provides detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, risks/stress/discomfort, benefits of the study, and other information.

Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I look forward to hearing from you and the possibility of conducting research in your district.

Best,

Christina Nowak Constantouros cnowak@uw.edu 805-451-4760

Appendix B

DISTRICT INCLUSION CRITERIA SCREENER

Pre-Screening Procedures: *Remind the individual that this screener is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask follow up questions based on the individual's responses to gain a clearer picture. This screener serves to see if the district meets the studies required inclusion criteria to be considered the case of study. The screener is designed to be completed asynchronously by a district representative.*

Questions: *For each question below indicate if the practice is in place, in progress, or not in place. Please utilize the notes section to provide any information that supports the determination of in place, in progress, or not in place.*

- 1) Does the district have an internal or external mission and vision statement that is published and upholds commitments to equity? If in place, please indicate below.**

- In Place
- In Progress
- Not in Place

Interviewer Notes:

- 2) Does district leadership share a commitment to the alignment and implementation of inclusion across every school in the district?**

- In Place
- In Progress
- Not in Place

Interviewer Notes:

- 3) Do schools in the district have an internal or external mission and vision statement that is published and upholds commitments to equity?**

- In Place
- In Progress
- Not in Place

Interviewer Notes:

- 4) Does the district have a plan for scaling of specific inclusionary practices across the district?**

- In Place
- In Progress
- Not in Place

Interviewer Notes:

5) Does the district have a plan for the inclusion of students with extensive support needs (ESN)* across the district? **sometimes referred to as students with low incidence disabilities, severe disabilities and/or students with intellectual and developmental disabilities*

- In Place
- In Progress
- Not in Place

Interviewer Notes:

6) Do you foresee any conflicts that might prevent research from occurring in your school district?

- Yes
- No

Interviewer Notes:

Thank you for filling out this screener. Please email responses back to Christina Nowak Constantouros by **Monday, September 30, 2024** at cnowak@uw.edu Following a review of your responses you will be contacted regarding participation in the study.

Appendix C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT INVITATION

Hello!

My name is Christina Nowak Constantouros. I am a Doctoral Candidate in the College of Education's Special Education Department at the University of Washington.

I am writing this email to inquire about your potential participation in a qualitative research study. The purpose of this study is to understand how inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education understand and implement inclusionary practices in their contexts with a specific focus on learners with extensive support needs (ESN). Additionally, this study seeks to understand the visioning process inclusionary practice leaders engage in to focus decision making on scaling and sustaining inclusive education in their schools across the district. This study focuses specifically on districts who are actively engaged in inclusive practices work and include learners with ESN in their mission and visioning work. In this study, I will explore the following research questions: (1) How do inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? (2) How do inclusionary practice leaders think about scaling inclusive practices district wide in ways that support learners with ESN?

Selected participants will be asked to participate in interviews, focus group conversations, observations, and provision of supporting artifacts. The interview commitment would include two individual interviews per participant (approx. 60 min each) and one focus group discussion (approx. 90 min). The observation commitment consists of a minimum of two observations. Depending on your role, observations may consist of a classroom observation, observation of a collaborative planning session, any department, site, or district level strategic planning meetings, and other collaborative meetings in line with the study purpose and research questions. Finally, participants will be asked to provide any artifacts, materials, or other resources to help provide context to observations and interview responses.

I would like to set up a time to meet in person or virtually to ask you a few questions to determine if you meet the inclusion/eligibility criteria for this study. Attached to this email you will find the Participant Inclusion Criteria Screener Questions (Appendix D attached) for reference.

Please let me know if you have any interest in participating. I am happy to answer any more questions you may have about the scope of the study, time commitment, or other. If selected for the study you will be provided with a Participant Consent Form (Appendix E attached) to review and sign that provides detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, risks/stress/discomfort, benefits of the study, and other information.

Again, please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I look forward to hearing from you and the possibility of setting up a time for a screening meeting!

Best,

Christina Nowak Constantouros

cnowak@uw.edu

805-451-4760

Appendix D

PARTICIPANT INCLUSION CRITERIA SCREENER

Pre-Screening Procedures: *Remind the individual that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the individual's responses to gain a clearer picture. This conversation serves as a screener to see if the individual meets the studies required inclusion criteria to be considered a participant.*

Questions:

1. Tell me about your social identity.

Follow up prompts:

- a) What is your gender identity?
- b) How old are you?
- c) What is your ethnic background?

Interviewer Notes:

2. Tell me about your educational background.

Follow up prompts:

- a) How long have you been part of the district community?
- b) In what roles or capacity have you been part of the district community?
- c) What site(s) do you work at within your district?

Interviewer Notes:

3. Tell me about your commitments to equity and inclusion.

Follow up prompts:

- a) Describe your inclusive commitments/goals for this school year.
- b) Describe any inclusionary practices you are currently implementing to meet your commitments/goals.
- c) Describe how students with extensive support needs (ESN) are part of your commitments?

Interviewer Notes:

4. Any other information to disclose.

Follow up prompts:

- a) Any long term planned absences or conflicts that might prevent participation in this study?

Interviewer Notes:

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Thank you for your engagement with these questions. Following a review of your responses you will be contacted regarding participation in the study.

Appendix E

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

INFORMATION ABOUT A UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON RESEARCH STUDY

Exploring district wide scaling and implementation of inclusive practices for learners with extensive support needs

What is this study about?

We are conducting this study to understand how inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education understand and implement inclusionary practices in their contexts with a specific focus on learners with extensive support needs (ESN). Additionally, this study seeks to understand the visioning process inclusionary practice leaders engage in to focus decision making on scaling and sustaining inclusive education in their schools across the district. This study focuses specifically on districts who are actively engaged in inclusive practices work and include learners with ESN in their mission and visioning. In this study, I am to explore the following research questions: (1) How do inclusionary practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining which inclusionary principles and practices to implement? (2) How do inclusionary practice leaders think about scaling inclusive practices district wide in ways that support learners with ESN?

What will you be asked to do?

If you choose to be in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Participate in two **Individual Interviews** (*approx. 60 minutes each*). Interviews will consist of structured and open-ended questions. During the interview follow up questions may be asked in order to ensure clarity and understanding
2. Participate in one **Focus Group Discussion** (*approx. 90 minutes*). Similar to the individual interviews, questions will be both specific and open ended. Questions are designed to spark discussion between group members.
3. Participate in at least two **Observations**. Invite researchers to observe classroom instruction, co-planning meetings, site or district strategy meetings, or other collaborative meetings.
4. Participate in **Artifact and Document Collection**. Provide artifacts or other supportive materials (e.g., vision/mission statements, master schedules, lesson plans, action plans, inclusionary practice rating scales) that provide evidence and additional information to claims made in the interview process or as referenced during observations.

PROCEDURES	Time Commitment	Location
Participant Inclusion Criteria Screening Meeting – Meet to discuss the research study and answer questions to determine eligibility to participate in the study.	30 minutes	Virtually or In Person

Individual Participation Interview #1 – Engage in a one-on-one discussion answering questions about inclusive education.	60 minutes	Virtually or In Person
Observation #1 – Invite researcher to observe classroom instruction, planning meetings, or other.	To be determined based on observation type	Virtually or In Person
Observation #2 – Invite researcher to observe classroom instruction, planning meetings, or other.	To be determined based on observation type	Virtually or In Person
Focus Group Interview – Engage with participants from other school sites in a group discussion centered about inclusive education.	90 minutes	Virtually or In Person
Provision of Documents/Artifacts – Provide researcher with materials that are visual representations of discussion topics or other representations of inclusionary practices.	Ongoing	Hardy copy or electronic
Individual Interview #2 – Engage in a one-on-one discussion answering questions about inclusive education.	60 minutes	Virtually or In Person

Why might you want, or not want, to participate?

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is that it may contribute to the ways in which administration can assist in building a school culture that is inclusive to all individuals including its teaching staff. Additionally, the perspectives of different individuals can assist in providing information on how to best prepare preservice teachers for inclusive settings as well as how to best support current teachers working or transitioning to inclusive settings. Finally, the collaborative opportunities provided in the focus may provide teachers with support on how to best serve a wide variety of learners.

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded. Additionally, talking about personal views on inclusive education in general as well as within the confines of a school can cause individuals to feel a sense of discomfort, insecurity, and vulnerability.

How will we protect the information you provide?

The information you provide will be anonymous. This means that your name will not ever be connected to the data. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the pseudonym code in a separate, secured location until the study is complete. The link between your identifiers and the research data will be destroyed at the end of the study. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

What if you want to stop being in this study, or if the researcher decides you should no longer participate?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Other information about this study.

Being in this study is voluntary. This means that you can refuse to sign up. It also means that if you do sign up, you can decide to stop being in the study at any time without penalty. Monetary compensation will be provided for participating in this study as well as any other opportunities to provide professional development to teams.

A copy of the consent form will be emailed to you at an email address that you provide. It will be a “PDF” document. Most computers already have PDF viewer software installed, which will allow you to open, read, or print the consent form. The email we send you will include a link to PDF viewer software (such as Adobe Acrobat Reader) in case your computer doesn’t already have it. If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the consent form at no cost to you, please contact the researcher(s) listed in this consent form.

What can you do if you want more information?

Talk to the study team. We are here to help you understand the study. Please ask us any questions you may have, even about things that are not in this document. It is our responsibility to give you the information you need to make a decision and to give you time to think about whether or not you want to sign up.

Talk to someone else. If you want to talk about the study with someone who is not part of the study team, talk about your rights as a research subject, or to report problems or complaints about the study, contact the UW Human Subjects Division.

UW Study Team	Principal Investigator Christina Nowak Constantouros cnowak@uw.edu 805-451-4760 Doctoral Advisor Carly Roberts carober1@uw.edu 206-221-7894
UW Human Subjects Division	206.543.0098 hsdinfo@uw.edu

Consent presenter statement

By printing my name on this form, I am attesting that I have provided the subject with information about this study. The participant has been given sufficient time to consider

participation and I have answered any questions they had. The participant indicated that they understand the nature of the study, including risks and benefits of participating.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent

Date

Subject's statement

By signing this consent form, I confirm that the study has been explained to me and I volunteer to participate in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research or feel I have been harmed by participating in the study, I can contact a member of the research team or the UW Human Subjects Division using the information listed above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

Appendix F

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 1 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Questions:

(1) Tell me about your commitments to equity and inclusion.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are your commitments supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- b. How are students of color and students with disabilities prioritized in these commitments?
- c. How do your commitments attend to issues of injustice?
- d. How are students with ESN part of commitments to equity and justice?
- e. Describe what published, outward, or inward facing documents exist that provide visibility of the schools or districts commitments. If inward facing, why are they inward facing and rather visible to the whole school community?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(2) Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around fostering cultures of belonging in your context.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How does work around belonging show up in your context?
- b. How are you defining or measuring belonging?
- c. Describe the specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support fostering communities of belonging.
 - i. Why were these practices chosen?
 - ii. How have these practices been taken up?
 - iii. In what ways have these practices shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- d. Describe how belonging shows up in the mission and vision statement for the school.
 - i. What was the significance of these decisions?
 - ii. Who was involved in these decisions?
 - iii. In what ways has the mission and vision shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?

- e. How have students with ESN been thought of regarding their belonging in spaces?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(3) Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating collaborative communities and practices in your context.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How does work around collaboration show up in your context?
- b. How are you defining or measuring collaboration?
- c. Describe the specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support collaborative communities.
 - i. Why were these practices chosen?
 - ii. How have these practices been taken up?
 - iii. In what ways have these practices shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- d. Describe how collaboration shows up in the school's master schedule and/or other building wide systems.
 - i. What was the significance of these decisions?
 - ii. Who was involved in these decisions?
 - iii. In what ways has a school's building schedule shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- e. How have students with ESN been thought of regarding the creation of collaborative communities?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(4) Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating opportunities for meaningful student engagement opportunities in your context.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How does work around engagement show up in your context?
- b. How are you defining or measuring engagement?
- c. Describe the specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support meaningful student engagement.
 - i. Why were these practices chosen?
 - ii. How have these practices been taken up?
 - iii. In what ways have these practices shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
 - iv. Describe your experience co-teaching, co-planning, co-assessing?
 - v. Describe your experience working with the principles of UDL?
- d. Describe how student engagement shows up in unit planning, lesson planning, or other building wide systems.

- i. What was the significance of these decisions?
 - ii. Who was involved in these decisions?
 - iii. In what ways has a school's building schedule shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- e. How have students with ESN been thought of regarding the creation of lessons that reflect commitments to access to support meaningful engagement?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(5) Tell me about planning to support the inclusion of students with ESN in general education.

Follow up prompts:

- a. Describe your MTSS framework.
 - i. How are student learning needs planned with intentionality when designing the master/building schedule?
 - ii. Who is involved in the development of the plans?
 - iii. What are the commitments and priorities of team members in the meetings?
 - 1. Take me back to a time when those commitments were present.
- b. How do student IEPs reflect a student's right to receive grade level instruction in general education?
 - i. What specific goals or ways of writing goals support meaningful access to general education?
 - 1. Describe an IEP goal and its connection to commitments to inclusion in general education.
 - ii. What specific accommodations and/or modifications support progress in general education?
 - iii. What does service delivery look like to support meaningful access in general education?
- c. How does planning account for the presence of educator bias?
 - i. Tell me about a time when a student proved you wrong and assumptions were challenged.
 - ii. How did that experience influence future growth?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(6) As an inclusionary practice leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to fostering educator agency. **Educator agency describes the influence members of a school system have in how they think about and include individuals within a system.*

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting individual and collective interpretations of inclusionary practices?
- b. How are you supporting the development and action around educator agency in support of inclusive education?
- c. How are you supporting teachers and staff in understanding the ways and places that ableism can be found in schools?
- d. What are some ways in which barriers are identified and dismantled in order to include students with disabilities in schools, classrooms, and curriculum?

Interviewer Notes:

--

(7) As an inclusionary practices leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to supporting the implementation of scaling and sustainability of inclusive education across the district.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Appendix G

LUNA INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Luna

Date of Interview: 2/24/25

Questions:

1. Tell me about any celebrations since the last time we met.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

2. Tell me about the SLP PLC meeting from observation 1.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe how the meeting came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) What were some of the action items or activities that occurred following the meeting?
- (e) Did this meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (f) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement any goals?

Interviewer Notes:

3. Tell me about the collaboration meeting with case managers about AAC for students with ESN from observation 2.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe how the meeting came to be (the catalyst).

- (d) What were some of the action items or activities that occurred following the meeting?
- (e) Did this meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (f) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement any goals?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating opportunities for meaningful student engagement opportunities in your context.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) How does work around engagement show up in your context?
- (b) How are you defining or measuring engagement?
- (c) Describe the specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support meaningful student engagement.
 - (i) Why were these practices chosen?
 - (ii) How have these practices been taken up?
 - (iii) In what ways have these practices shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
 - (iv) Describe your experience co-teaching, co-planning, co-assessing?
 - (v) Describe your experience working with the principles of UDL?
- (d) Describe how student engagement shows up in unit planning, lesson planning, or other building wide systems.
 - (i) What was the significance of these decisions?
 - (ii) Who was involved in these decisions?
 - (iii) In what ways has a school's building schedule shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- (e) How have students with ESN been thought of regarding the creation of lessons that reflect commitments to access to support meaningful engagement?

Interviewer Notes:

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5. How are you thinking about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?

- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix H

NEIL INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants' responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Neil

Date of Interview: 3/25/25

Questions:

- 1. Please describe any celebrations that have occurred this school year.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

- 2. Tell me about the CLR binder study from observation 1 (i.e. strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of CLR to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning to use the CLR strategies to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this CLR binder study support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

- 3. Tell me about the IP Demo Site tour you hosted from observation 2 (i.e. strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the tour.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the tour.

- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following the tour.
- (d) Describe your understanding of the tour process to support visitors in understanding how to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning from this tour to support the needs of students with ESN.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. How are you thinking about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix I

CLEO INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Cleo

Date of Interview: 3/25/25

Questions:

- 1. Please describe any celebrations that have occurred this school year.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

- 2. Tell me about the co-taught English lesson from observation 1.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the class period.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the class period.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of co-teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning in this lesson or in previous or future lessons to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

- 3. Tell me about the co-taught Math lesson from observation 1.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the class period.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the class period.

- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of co-teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning in this lesson or in previous or future lessons to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. How are you thinking about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix J

STEVE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants' responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Steve

Date of Interview: 3/31/25

Questions:

- 1. Please describe any celebrations that have occurred this school year.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

- 2. Tell me about the EMS belonging PD from observation 1 (i.e. strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of CLR to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning to use the CLR strategies to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this CLR binder study support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

- 3. Tell me about the IP Demo Site tour you hosted from observation 2 (i.e. strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the tour.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the tour.

- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following the tour.
- (d) Describe your understanding of the tour process to support visitors in understanding how to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning from this tour to support the needs of students with ESN.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. Tell me about planning to support the inclusion of students with ESN in general education.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe your MTSS framework.
 - (i) How are student learning needs planned with intentionality when designing the master/building schedule?
 - (ii) Who is involved in the development of the plans?
 - (iii) What are the commitments and priorities of team members in the meetings?
 - 1) Take me back to a time when those commitments were present.
- (b) How do student IEPs reflect a student's right to receive grade level instruction in general education?
 - (i) What specific goals or ways of writing goals support meaningful access to general education?
 - 1) Describe an IEP goal and its connection to commitments to inclusion in general education.
 - (ii) What specific accommodations and/or modifications support progress in general education?
 - (iii) What does service delivery look like to support meaningful access in general education?
- (c) How does planning account for the presence of educator bias?
 - (i) Tell me about a time when a student proved you wrong and assumptions were challenged.
 - (ii) How did that experience influence future growth?

Interviewer Notes:

--

5. How are you thinking about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?

- i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix K

CARLA INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Carla
Date of Interview: 3/5/25

Questions:

- 1. Share with me any celebrations since our first interview.**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

- 2. Tell me about the co-taught math lesson from observation 1 (Ex: strengths, challenges, next steps, etc.).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the class period.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the class period.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of co-teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning in this lesson or in previous or future lessons to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

- 3. Tell me about the IEP meeting from observation 2 (ex: strengths, challenges, next steps, family involvement, etc.).**

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.

- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following the meeting.
- (d) Describe your understanding of the IEP document/meeting.
- (e) Describe family involvement in the meeting.
- (f) Describe how this meeting supports students with ESN in inclusive settings.
- (g) Did this IEP meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (h) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

4. Tell me about a best experience you have had with your school team/community supporting students with disabilities.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) What made this a highlight for you?

Interviewer Notes:

5. Tell me about the things you value about yourself, your work, your organization.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) What do you value most about the story you shared?
- (b) How might these strengths support the continued success of your students with disabilities?

Interviewer Notes:

6. Describe your wishes for the future - for yourself, your work, your organization.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Why these specific wishes?
- (b) How will these wishes support the needs of individuals with disabilities?

Interviewer Notes:

7. Describe how you will leverage your agency to support the scaling and sustainability of your dreams/goals.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Do you anticipate any challenges regarding your goals?
- (b) What is your implementation plan for these goals?
- (c) How will you know when you have reached your goals?

Interviewer Notes:

Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix L

BADER INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Bader

Date of Interview: 3/24/25

Questions:

1. Share with me any celebrations since our first interview.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

2. Tell me about the co-taught English lesson from observation 1.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the class period.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the class period.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following instruction.
- (d) Describe your understanding of co-teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe any planning in this lesson or in previous or future lessons to support the needs of students with ESN in your classes.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

3. Tell me about the co-planning session from observation 2.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the planning session.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the planning session.
- (c) Describe any action items or activities that might have occurred following the planning meeting.

- (d) Describe your understanding of co-planning to meet the needs of all learners.
- (e) Describe how you use planning time to support students with ESN.
- (f) Did this lesson support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (g) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement in future lessons?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating opportunities for meaningful student engagement opportunities in your context.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) How does work around engagement show up in your context?
- (b) How are you defining or measuring engagement?
- (c) Describe the specific inclusionary practices leveraged to support meaningful student engagement.
 - (i) Why were these practices chosen?
 - (ii) How have these practices been taken up?
 - (iii) In what ways have these practices shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
 - (iv) Describe your experience co-teaching, co-planning, co-assessing?
 - (v) Describe your experience working with the principles of UDL?
- (d) Describe how student engagement shows up in unit planning, lesson planning, or other building wide systems.
 - (i) What was the significance of these decisions?
 - (ii) Who was involved in these decisions?
 - (iii) In what ways has a school's building schedule shown to be supportive of diverse groups of learners?
- (e) How have students with ESN been thought of regarding the creation of lessons that reflect commitments to access to support meaningful engagement?

Interviewer Notes:

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5. How are you thinking about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?

- b. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- c. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

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Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix M

MOLLY INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants' responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Molly

Date of Interview: 3/12/25

Questions:

1. Please describe any celebrations that have occurred this school year.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) Describe the influence these celebrations have had on you, your work, or others.

Interviewer Notes:

2. Tell me about the student centers from observation 1 (strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the lesson/activity.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the lesson/activity.
- (c) Describe how the lesson/activity came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) Did this lesson/activity support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (e) Are there any specific inclusionary practices you are implementing or have goals to implement with this group or in general?

Interviewer Notes:

3. Tell me about the student led cooperative play from observation 2 (strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the lesson/activity.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the lesson/activity.
- (c) Describe how the lesson/activity came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) Did this lesson/activity support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (e) Are there any specific inclusionary practices you are implementing or have goals to implement?

Interviewer Notes:

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4. Tell me about planning to support the inclusion of students with ESN in general education?

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe your MTSS framework.
 - (i) How are student learning needs planned with intentionality when designing the master/building schedule?
 - (ii) Who is involved in the development of the plans?
 - (iii) What are the commitments and priorities of team members in the meetings?
 - 1) Take me back to a time when those commitments were present.
- (b) How do student IEPs reflect a student's right to receive grade level instruction in general education?
 - (i) What specific goals or ways of writing goals support meaningful access to general education?
 - (ii) Describe an IEP goal and its connection to commitments to inclusion in general education.
 - (iii) What specific accommodations and/or modifications support progress in general education?
 - (iv) What does service delivery look like to support meaningful access in general education?
- (c) How does planning account for the presence of educator bias?
 - (i) Tell me about a time when a student proved you wrong and assumptions were challenged.
 - (ii) How did that experience influence future growth?

Interviewer Notes:

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5. As an inclusionary practice leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to fostering educator agency. **Educator agency describes the influence members of a school system have in how they think about and include individuals within a system.*

Follow up prompts:

- (a) How are you supporting individual and collective interpretations of inclusionary practices?
- (b) How are you supporting the development and action around educator agency in support of inclusive education?
- (c) How are you supporting teachers and staff in understanding the ways and places that ableism can be found in schools?
- (d) What are some ways in which barriers are identified and dismantled in order to include students with disabilities in schools, classrooms, and curriculum?

Interviewer Notes:

6. How are you continuing to think about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix N

MARIE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants' responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Marie

Date of Interview: 3/19/25

Questions:

1. Please describe any celebrations that have occurred this school year.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) Describe the influence these celebrations have had on you, your work, or others.

Interviewer Notes:

2. Tell me about the book study meeting from observation 1 (strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe how the meeting came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) Did this meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (e) Are there any specific inclusionary practices you are implementing or have goals to implement with this group or in general?

Interviewer Notes:

3. Tell me about the collaboration meeting with partners from UW from observation 2 (strengths, challenges, dreaming, designing, etc).

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe how the meeting came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) Did this meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (e) Are there any specific inclusionary practices you are implementing or have goals to implement?

(f) Anything else to share related to working with outside partners?

Interviewer Notes:

--

4. How are you continuing to think about your role in regards to supporting scale and sustainability of inclusionary practices for all students, but especially for students with ESN?

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - i. What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - ii. What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - iii. Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - iv. How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- b. Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who was involved?
 - iii. What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

--

Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix O

DOSIE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2 QUESTIONS

Pre-Individual Interview Procedures: *Remind the participant that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participant that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participant: Dosie

Date of Interview: 2/26/25

Questions:

1. Tell me about any celebrations since the last time we met.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe how these celebrations made you feel.
- (b) How did these celebrations influence your future work?

Interviewer Notes:

2. Share your thoughts about the building leader administration meeting from observation 1.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) Describe some of the strengths of the meeting.
- (b) Describe some of the challenges of the meeting.
- (c) Describe how the meeting came to be (the catalyst).
- (d) What were some of the action items or activities that occurred following the meeting?
- (e) Did this meeting support any dreaming or designing for future work?
- (f) Are there any specific practices you are implementing or would like to implement any goals?

Interviewer Notes:

3. As an inclusionary practice leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to fostering educator agency. *Educator agency describes the influence members of a school system have in how they think about and include individuals within a system.

Follow up prompts:

- a. How are you supporting individual and collective interpretations of inclusionary practices?

- b. How are you supporting the development and action around educator agency in support of inclusive education?
- c. How are you supporting teachers and staff in understanding the ways and places that ableism can be found in schools?
- d. What are some ways in which barriers are identified and dismantled in order to include students with disabilities in schools, classrooms, and curriculum?

Interviewer Notes:

4. As an inclusionary practices leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to supporting the implementation of scaling and sustainability of inclusive education across the district.

Follow up prompts:

- (a) How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices in your context?
 - (i) What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - (ii) What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - (iii) Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - (iv) How do you feel about the progress your site has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- (b) How are you supporting efforts to scale and sustain inclusive practices throughout the district?
 - (i) What type of documentation exists that supports the evolution of the work?
 - (ii) What types of goals are in place for this year and subsequent years?
 - (iii) Who was involved in creating these plans?
 - (iv) How do you feel about the progress your district has made towards social justice for diverse groups of learners, such as those with ESN?
- (c) Tell me about a turning point or significant moment where you felt a momentum shift.
 - (i) What happened?
 - (ii) Who was involved?
 - (iii) What was significant about this moment?

Interviewer Notes:

5. Tell me about planning to support the inclusion of students with ESN in general education.

Follow up prompts:

- a. Describe your MTSS framework.
 - i. How are student learning needs planned with intentionality when designing the master/building schedule?
 - ii. Who is involved in the development of the plans?

- iii. What are the commitments and priorities of team members in the meetings?
 - 1. Take me back to a time when those commitments were present.
 - b. How do student IEPs reflect a student's right to receive grade level instruction in general education?
 - i. What specific goals or ways of writing goals support meaningful access to general education?
 - 1. Describe an IEP goal and its connection to commitments to inclusion in general education.
 - ii. What specific accommodations and/or modifications support progress in general education?
 - iii. What does service delivery look like to support meaningful access in general education?
 - c. How does planning account for the presence of educator bias?
 - i. Tell me about a time when a student proved you wrong and assumptions were challenged.
 - ii. How did that experience influence future growth?

Interviewer Notes:

--

Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix P

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Pre-Focus Group Procedures: *Remind the participants that this interview will be audio recorded in order to obtain an accurate record of our conversation. The recording will be transcribed without identifiable information and will be destroyed following the conclusion of the study. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.*

Remind the participants that this conversation is confidential and non-judgmental. The interviewer reserves the right to ask clarifying questions based on the participants responses to gain a clearer picture.

Participants: Luna, Cleo, Steve, Bader, Molly, & Marie
Date of Interview: 3/18/25

Questions:

- 1. Please describe any successes or celebrations that have occurred recently or this school year.**

Follow up prompts:

- a. How did these celebrations make you feel?
- b. Describe the influence these celebrations have had on you, your work, or others.

Interviewer Notes:

- 2. Please share a best experience you have had with your school team/community supporting students with disabilities.**

Follow up prompts:

- a. What made this experience a highlight for you?
- b. What do you value most about this story/experience?

Interviewer Notes:

- 3. Identify what has meaning and value to you now.**

Follow up prompts:

- a. What things do you value about yourself, your work, your district?
- b. Describe any special experiences, cultures, tools, protocols, etc. that are occurring in your school.
- c. What do you value most about the story/experience shared in the previous question?

Interviewer Notes:

- 4. Dream about the ideal possible outcome for the future.**

Follow up prompts:

- a. What are your wishes for the future - for yourself, your work, your district?

Interviewer Notes:

--

5. Discuss any takeaways from this focus group session.

Interviewer Notes:

--

Research Questions:

- (1) How does a district committed to inclusive education scale inclusive practices district-wide in ways that support learners with ESN?
- (2) How do inclusive practice leaders in a district committed to inclusive education consider learners with ESN when determining with inclusionary principles and practices to implement?

Appendix Q

FIELD NOTE OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Directions: Complete form by reporting observation in each of the following sections: 1) contextual information, 2) field notes, 3) environmental observations, 4) identification of inclusionary practices, 5) reflection, and 6) other.

1) CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION		
Date: <add text>	Observation Start Time: <add text>	Observation End Time: <add text>
District: <add text>	School: <add text>	Location: <add text>
Observation Type: <add text>	Participants: <add text>	
Observation Purpose: <add text>		

2) FIELD NOTES	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
● <add text>	● <add text>

3) IDENTIFICATION OF INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES

Inclusive Practices in Action	Description & Evidence of Inclusive Practices in Action
• Assistive Technology • Blended Learning • Co-Teaching • Co-Planning • Collaboration • Culturally Responsive Pedagogy • Data Analysis Protocols • Differentiated Instruction & Planning • Embedded Academic Instruction in GenEd • Embedded Nonacademic Instruction in GenEd • Equitable Grading • Family & Community Partnerships • Flexible Service Delivery • GLAD Strategies • Inclusive IEPs • Inclusive Mission & Vision • Leadership Development • Master Scheduling • Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) • Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) • Professional Learning Communities (PLC) • Social Emotional Learning • Strengths-Based Planning • Student Engagement • Students Engaged in Core Content • Teaching Self Determination • Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	• <add text>

4) ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATIONS

Environmental Rendering	Description and Reflective Notes
<copy and paste in photo or drawing of photo>	• <add text>

5) REFLECTION	
Guiding Questions	Discussion Notes
• Are individuals with extensive support needs (ESN) present (classroom) or discussed (planning/meeting)?	• <add text>
• Were specific inclusionary practices chosen with students with ESN in mind?	• <add text>
• Was there any evidence of scaling of inclusionary practices discussed?	• <add text>
• Were individuals with ESN included in the conversations about scale?	• <add text>

6) OTHER

- <add text>

Appendix R

FIELD NOTE ARTIFACT PROTOCOL

Directions: Complete form by reporting observation in each of the following sections: 1) contextual information, 2) field notes, 3) identification of inclusionary practices, 4) reflection, and 5) other.

1) ARTIFACT CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION		
Date: <add text>	School: <add text>	Artifact Provided By: <add text>
Artifact Description/Purpose: <add text>		

2) ARTIFACT FIELD NOTES	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<add text>	<add text>

3) ARTIFACT IDENTIFICATION OF INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES	
Inclusive Practices in Action	Description & Evidence of Inclusive Practices in Action
- Assistive Technology - Blended Learning - Co-Teaching - Co-Planning - Collaboration	<add text>

• Culturally Responsive Pedagogy • Data Analysis Protocols • Differentiated Instruction & Planning • Embedded Academic Instruction In GenEd • Embedded Nonacademic Instruction in GenEd • Equitable Grading • Family & Community Partnerships • Flexible Service Delivery • GLAD Strategies • Inclusive IEPs • Inclusive Mission & Vision • Leadership Development • Master Scheduling • Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) • Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) • Professional Learning Communities (PLC) • Social Emotional Learning • Strengths-Based Planning • Student Engagement • Students Engaged in Core Content • Teaching Self Determination • Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	
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4) ARTIFACT REFLECTION	
Guiding Questions	Discussion Notes
• Is there any evidence to suggest that this artifact was made to support students with extensive support needs (ESN)?	• <add text>
• Does this artifact contain any evidence of specific	• <add text>

inclusionary practices to support students with ESN?	
Does this artifact contain any evidence to support scaling of inclusionary practices for students with ESN?	<add text>

5) OTHER
<add text>

Appendix S

Coding and Analysis Phases

I. PRE-CODING PHASE

(Provisional “a priori Codes)	
SCALE SUSTAINABILITY STUDENTS WITH EXTENSIVE SUPPORT NEEDS (ESN) INCLUSION EQUITY BELONGING LEADERSHIP INCLUSIVE PRACTICES COLLABORATION PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC)	UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOCY (CLR) COTEACHING COPLANNING MISSION & VISION AGENCY COMMUNICATION ACCESS FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERS SYSTEMS

II. INITIAL CODING CYCLE

In Vivo Codes	Structural Codes	Descriptive Codes	Process Codes
"ALL MEANS ALL, TAKES ALL" "ALL STUDENTS ARE GENED STUDENTS" "AMAZING AND SO GRATIFYING" "ARE PEOPLE REALLY NOT INCLUDING KIDS?" "BARAMETER CHECKS" "BELONG, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE" "BELONGING IS SUCH A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE" "BEST QUALITY OF LIFE" "BLENDING RESOURCES" "BOOTS ON THE GROUND" "BUILD UP TEACHER AGENCY" "BUY IN FROM THE RIGHT PEOPLE" "CAN WE JUST ALL BE VULNERABLE" "CANT DO IT ALL AT ONCE" "CANT DO IT ALONE" "CANT WAIT FOR THE DISTRICT" "CELEBRATE LITTLE VICTORIES" "CENTERED IN THE STORIES OF KIDS" "CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS" "COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES" "COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY" "COMPASSIONATE RESPONDING" "CREATE THAT LUCK"	ABLEISM ACCESSIBILITY ADVOCACY AGENCY ALLIES appreciative inquiry APPRECIATIVE ATTENDANCE TIED TO BELONGING AUTHENTIC AUTONOMY AWARENESS BALANCE BELIEF IN SELF BELIEVE BELONGING BELONGING AND DIGNITY BELONGING AS THE BASELINE BELONGING TIED TO ACHIEVEMENT BIAS BROADEN PERSPECTIVE Build Confidence BUILD FROM THE SUCCESSES CELEBRATION CLARITY CLARITY THROUGH TOOLS COACHING COASSESSMENT COLLABORATION COMMITMENT COMMON UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY COMPASSION COPLANNING COTEACHING	AAC ACCEPTED ACCESS TO RESOURCES ACCOMMODATIONS ADULT BEHAVIOR ADULT LEARNING ADULT LIMITATIONS ADULTS EDUCATED BY THE STUDENTS AGE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE ASSISTIVE TECH BOUNDARIES capacity challenged CHOICE CLEAR LEARNING OBJECTIVES CLEAR OUTCOMES COMFORT COMMUNICATION Connected CONNECTIONS DATA ANALYSIS PROTOCOLS Difference maker DIRECT INSTRUCTION DISCOURAGEMENT EMBEDDED ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION EMBEDDED NON-ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION ENCOURAGEMENT Engaged in Core Content ESN ESSENTIAL SKILLS ESSENTIAL STANDARDS EVOLUTIONARY Excellence	ACTING AS THE BRIDGE/VOICE ASK QUESTIONS TO CREATE MOMENTUM DATA BASED DECISION MAKING DESIGN DIFFERENTIATION DISMANTLING BARRIERS ELIMINATE TRACKING ENGAGEMENT explore FACILITATION FEEDBACK INCLUSIONARY PRACTICE INTENTIONALITY INTERVENTION WITH A PURPOSE Leadership Development LEADING BY EXAMPLE LEARNING BY DOING LISTENING MODELING MOVING BEYOND SOLO PRACTITIONERS NUTRUTING observation Positive Reinforcement Positive Behavior Supports REFLECTION REINFORCING RESISTANCE Revising Rewarding SHARED EXPERIENCES/NOTICINGS STRATEGIC PLANNING

"CREATING A PASSION FOR LEARNING" "Dipstick checks" "Dissonance" "educational malpractice" "ENSURE HIGH LEVELS OF LEARNING" "expectation center" "EXPLORATORY AND CURIOUS" "FOCUS AREAS" "FOCUS ON LEARNING" "FRAMEWORK" "GIVE YOURSELF SOME GRACE" "HONOR THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE" "I WISH I COULD HAVE DONE MORE" "INFUSED IN MY LIFE" "INSTITUTIONAL RACISM" "INVITE THEM IN" "IT CAN BE SEAMLESS AND FEEL NATURAL" "JOYOUS" "KEEP THE KIDS IN" "LAYERS" "LIFE IS A SPECTRUM" "LOOSES & TIGHTS" "MEANINGFUL DOES NOT MEAN SAME" "MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL OUR KIDS" "MESSY WORK" "Move faster by slowing down" "NARROW THE WORK" "OUR DIFFERENCES HELP EACH OTHER" "PIVOTAL MOMENT" "PUBLIC ED AS THE GREAT	creativity CRITICAL THINKING CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES DEEPLY EMOTIONAL WORK DISABILITY ACROSS ALL WALKS OF LIFE DISPROPORTIONALITY DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP Diversity DREAM educational benefit EMPATHY EQUITABLE GRADING EQUITY FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS FEAR TO SHARE ASSESSMENT DATA FLEXIBILITY FREEDOM FROM CREATION TO COMMONPLACE FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE HIGH EXPECTATIONS HOPE IDENTIFY PINCH POINTS IN THE SYSTEM IMPLICIT BIAS INCLUDED INCLUSION GATEKEEPING INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES INDIVIDUAL LENS INFLUENCE INJUSTICE INTERDEPENDENCE JUSTICE MEANINGFUL	EXCITED EXTENSIVE SUPPORT NEEDS FAMILIES POSITIONED AS EXPERTS FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY FULFILLMENT GRADE LEVEL CURRICULUM grading Grateful HEARD HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT INCLUSIVE BUILDING SCHEDULE Inclusive IEPs Inspire Integrity INTERWOVEN INVITED Journey Known Love Meaningful expression MISGO MODIFICATIONS MOVEMENT MTSS STRUCTURES MULTI LANGUAGE LEARNERS Natural Opportunities PASSIONATE PATIENCE PBIS PEER SUPPORTS PERIODS OF DISILLUSION PLC Prepared PRIDE PURPOSEFUL REPRESENTATION Respected	STRENGTH BASED DECISION MAKING Strengths Based Planning STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTING CURRENT & FUTURE LEADERS Teaching Self-Determination
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EQUALIZER" "PUSH ON THE SYSTEM" "QUESTIONS TO INFORM OUR WORK" "RESPONSIVE FOR THE COGNITIVE LOAD" "RESPONSIVE TO STUDENT NEEDS" "ROLES, ROUTINES, STRUCTURES" "SAVE ALL KIDS" "SCAFFOLDS AND SUPPORTS" "Science of teaching" "SKILL GROUPING" "SPHERES OF INFLUENCE" "STUDENT CENTERED" "TAKING CHANCES AND RISKS" "TANGIBLE AND CAPTIVATING" "THIS IS OUR CULTURE" "THREATENED" "TIED TO PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE" "VALIDATED" "WHAT DO WE HAVE CONTROL OVER"	MINDSET MISSION AND VISION DRIVEN OPEN MINDSET PAST EXPERIENCES SHAPING FUTURE PERSONALITY AND INCLUSION PRESENT BUT NOT INCLUDED PRESUMED COMPETENCE PRIOTITIES & VALUES PRIVILEGE RELATIONSHIPS RQ1-SCALE RQ2-SUSTAINABILITY SAFE SEGREATED, BUT INCLUDED SHARED OWNERSHIP SOCIAL BELONGING STUDENT ADVOCATE STUDENT VOICE STUDENTS ARE CAPABLE SYSTEMATIC OPPRESSION SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES SYSTEMS LEVEL COMMITMENTS THINKING BEYOND TRANSPARENCY TRUST UNMET NEEDS Structural	SCOPE AND SEQUENCE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS STARTING POINT STRENGTHS STRUCTURE & GUIDANCE STUDENT INTEREST SUCCESS INDICATORS SUPPORT SYSTEMS Supported TEMPERED EXPECTATIONS thrive UDL UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING Urgency VALUED VERTICAL ALIGNMENT Descriptive	
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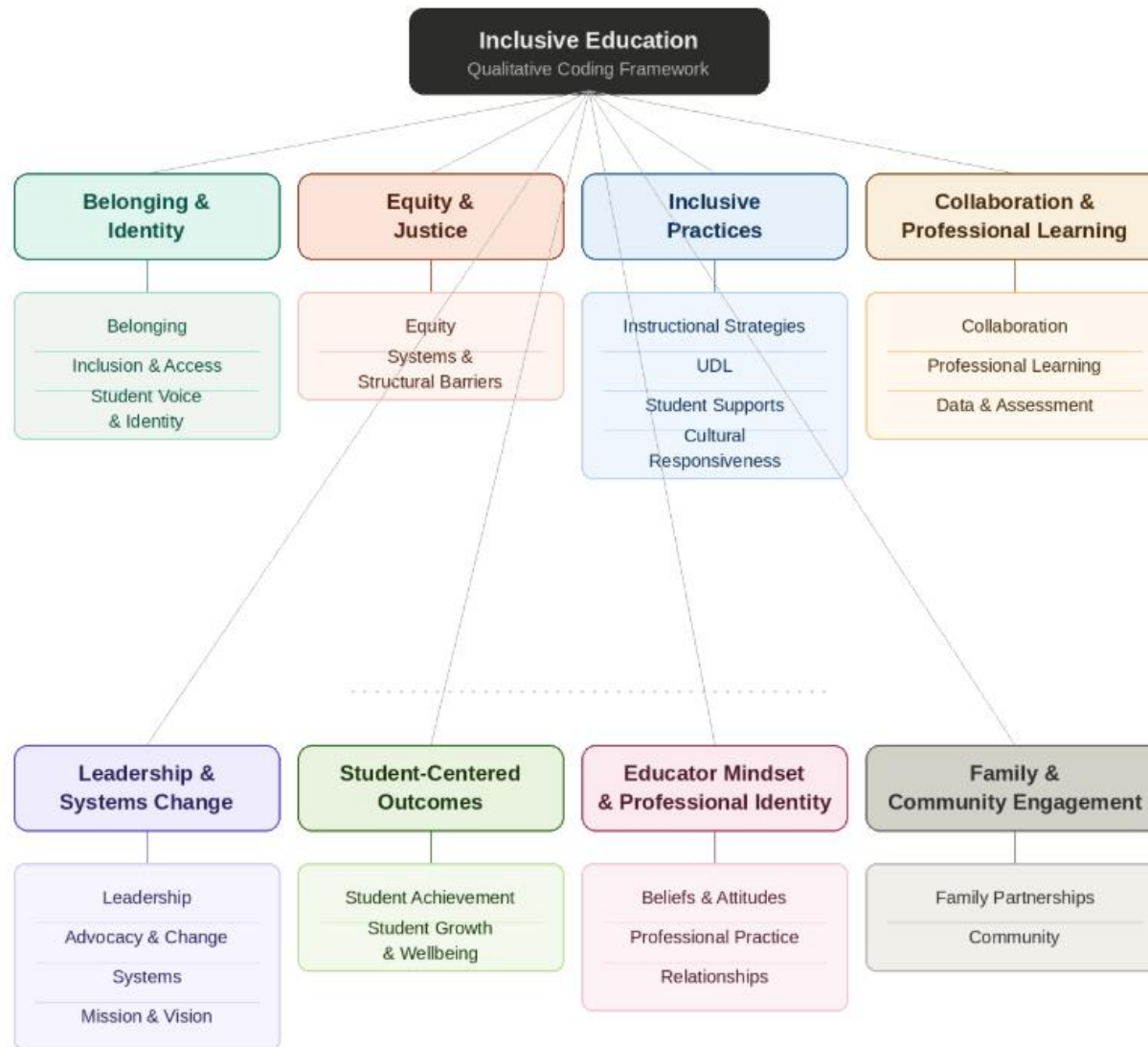
III. SECOND CYCLE CUMULATIVE CODING

Focused Codes	
289 COLLABORATION	59 EQUITY
277 RQ1-SCALE	58 AUTHENTIC
268 BELONGING	58 AWARENESS
256 RQ2-SUSTAINABILITY	57 COPLANNING
220 AGENCY	56 BROADEN PERSPECTIVE
207 *RICH QUOTE	56 APPRECIATIVE
194 MODELING	54 "BELONGING IS SUCH A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE"
177 INCLUDED	53 VERTICAL ALIGNMENT
168 SYSTEMS LEVEL COMMITMENTS	53 MTSS STRUCTURES
149 CLARITY THROUGH TOOLS	53 "PUSH ON THE SYSTEM"
148 "STUDENT CENTERED"	53 ACCOMMODATIONS
139 COMMUNITY	51 UDL
138 ESN	50 ACCESS TO RESOURCES
136 CELEBRATION	50 RELATIONSHIPS
134 INCLUSIONARY PRACTICE	50 AUTONOMY
131 "COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES"	50 "GIVE YOURSELF SOME GRACE"
123 EXTENSIVE SUPPORT NEEDS	49 "CENTERED IN THE STORIES OF KIDS"
117 ENGAGEMENT	49 CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICLY RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES
115 "RESPONSIVE TO STUDENT NEEDS"	49 STRENGTHS
112 FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	49 "AMAZING AND SO GRATIFYING"
111 ADVOCACY	48 DIFFERENTIATION
108 COMMITMENT	47 PRESUMED COMPETENCE
105 STRATEGIC PLANNING	47 "FOCUS ON LEARNING"
97 SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES	46 FEEDBACK
96 COACHING	46 ABLEISM
93 PAST EXPERIENCES SHAPING FUTURE	45 "QUESTIONS TO INFORM OUR WORK"
89 "THIS IS OUR CULTURE"	45 COTEACHING
87 MINDSET	45 "ALL MEANS ALL, TAKES ALL"
87 MISSION AND VISION DRIVEN	44 FAMILIES POSITIONED AS EXPERTS
85 STRUCTURE & GUIDANCE	43 STUDENT VOICE
85 "CANT DO IT ALONE"	43 UNMET NEEDS
84 LISTENING	43 "INFUSED IN MY LIFE"
84 PEER SUPPORTS	42 "FOCUS AREAS"
83 AAC	41 "EXPLORATORY AND CURIOUS"
81 "COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY"	41 ACCESSIBILITY

80	MEANINGFUL	38	IMPLICIT BIAS
80	"BUY IN FROM THE RIGHT PEOPLE"	38	STRENGTH BASED DECISION MAKING
79	LEARNING BY DOING	38	ADULTS EDUCATED BY THE STUDENTS
78	"BUILD UP TEACHER AGENCY"	38	"TAKING CHANCES AND RISKS"
74	"CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS"	38	ACTING AS THE BRIDGE/VOICE
73	DISMANTLING BARRIERS	37	"PIVOTAL MOMENT"
72	SUPPORTING CURRENT & FUTURE LEADERS	37	IDENTIFY PINCH POINTS IN THE SYSTEM
71	"BOOTS ON THE GROUND"	37	"JOYOUS"
71	COMMUNICATION	35	"INVITE THEM IN"
70	BELONGING TIED TO ACHIEVEMENT	35	ACCEPTED
70	HIGH EXPECTATIONS	35	MOVING BEYOND SOLO PRACTITIONERS
69	CLARITY	35	ADULT LEARNING
69	DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP	35	MODIFICATIONS
62	"ENSURE HIGH LEVELS OF LEARNING"	34	FACILITATION
62	"ROLES, ROUTINES, STRUCTURES"	29	"HONOR THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE"
34	SHARED EXPERIENCES/NOTICINGS	27	"BARAMETER CHECKS"
34	"CANT WAIT FOR THE DISTRICT"	27	"INSTITUTIONAL RACISM"
33	INVITED	27	Leadership Development
33	"BLENDING RESOURCES"	26	"BEST QUALITY OF LIFE"
33	"COMPASSIONATE RESPONDING"	26	FLEXIBILITY
33	"CAN WE JUST ALL BE VULNERABLE"	26	"MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL OUR KIDS"
30	PRIOTITIES & VALUES	26	TRUST
29	ATTENDANCE TIED TO BELONGING	26	DATA BASED DECISION MAKING
29	LEADING BY EXAMPLE	26	ESSENTIAL STANDARDS
29	"SAVE ALL KIDS"	26	EXCITED
29	PERIODS OF DISILLUSION	26	"CANT DO IT ALL AT ONCE"
29	"FRAMEWORK"	25	PRIVILEGE
29	SUPPORT SYSTEMS		

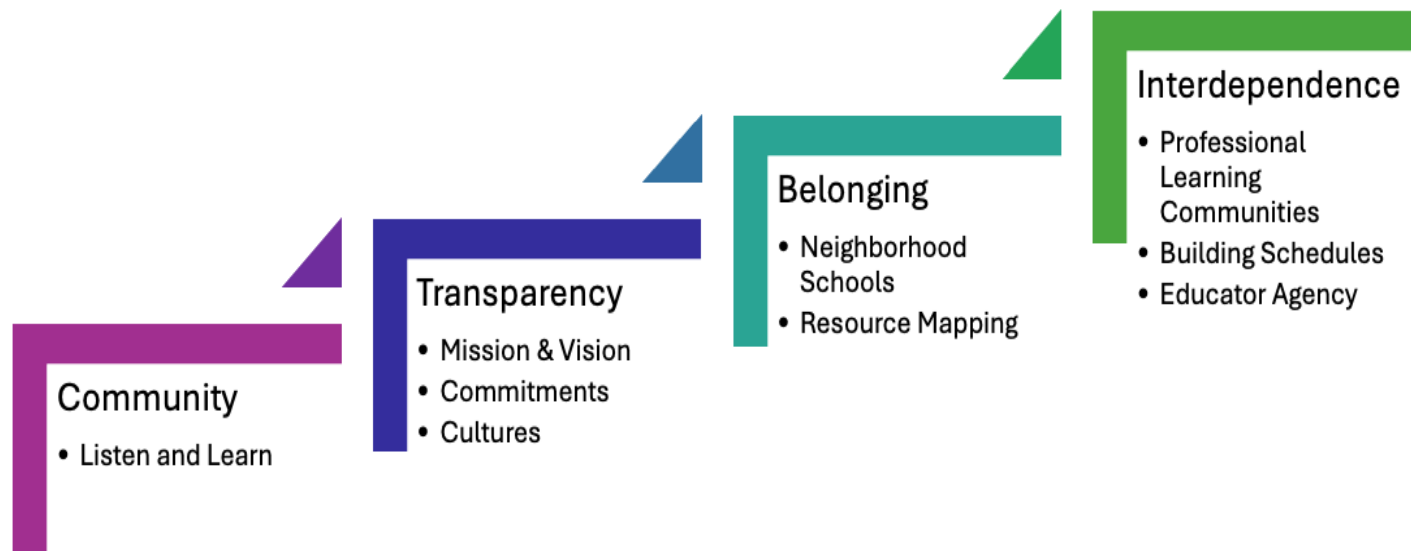
Pattern Codes	
Theme	Sub Theme
1. Educator Mindset & Professional Identity	Beliefs & Attitudes Professional Practice Relationships
2. Inclusive Practices	Instructional Strategies Student Supports
3. Leadership & Systems Change	Leadership Systems Advocacy & Change Mission & Vision
4. Belonging & Identity	Belonging Inclusion & Access Student Voice & Identity
5. Collaboration & Professional Learning	Data & Assessment Collaboration Professional Learning
6. Equity & Justice	Equity Systems & Structural Barriers
7. Student-Centered Outcomes	Student Growth & Wellbeing Student Achievement
8. Family & Community Engagement	Community Family Partnerships

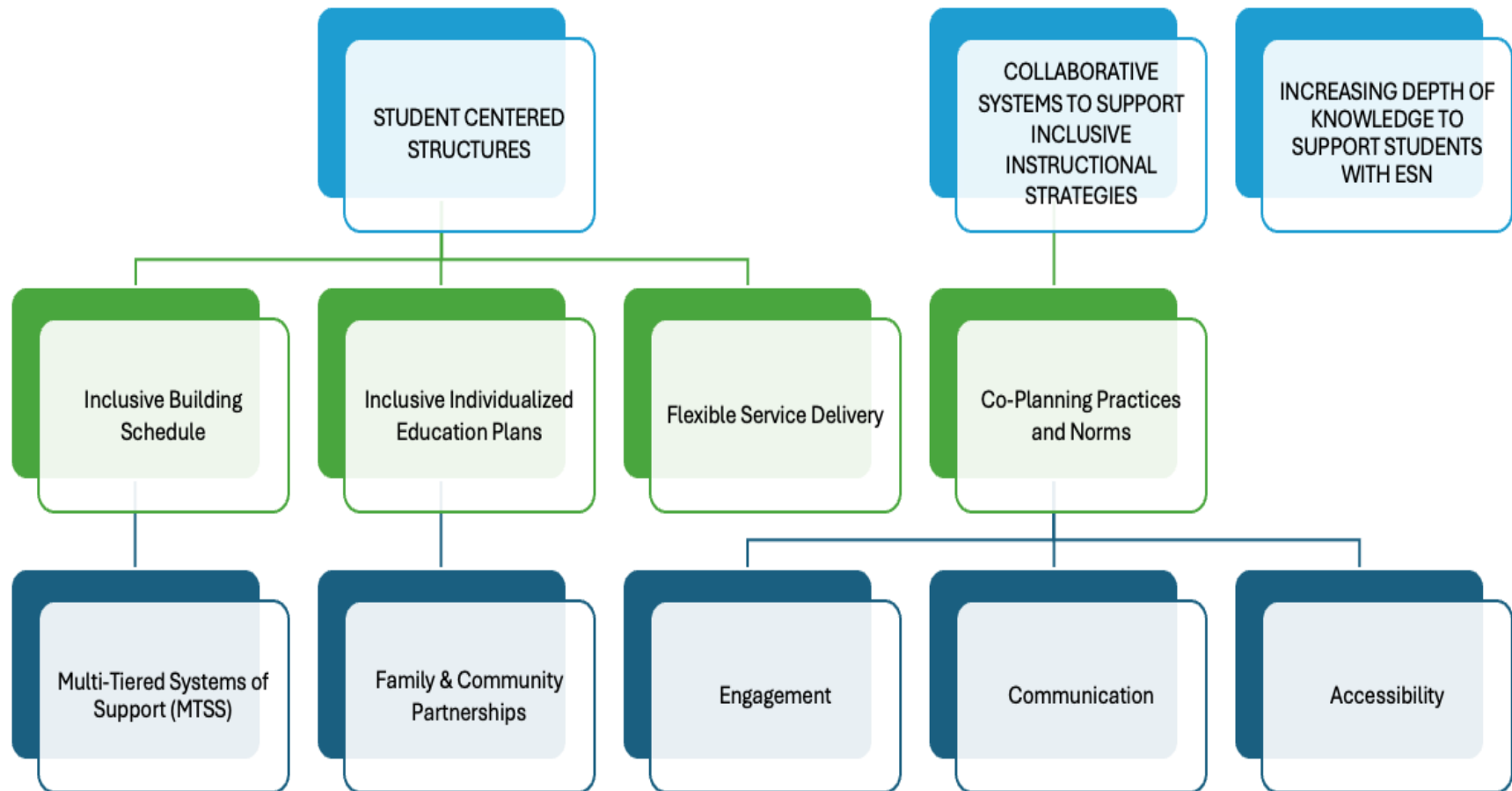
Pattern Codes Graphic



IV. THEORY

Chapter 4: Scaling and Sustaining as a Whole System



Chapter 5: Inclusionary Practice Leaders Scaling and Sustaining in their Contexts

Appendix T

RESEARCH PROTOCOL FOR DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Participant Name: _____

Individual Interview #1

Date: _____

Pre Interview Procedures

- Send calendar invite confirming time and location as soon as possible
- Email questions 24 - 48 hours ahead of the scheduled interview
- Confirm meeting 24 - 48 hours ahead of time

During Interview Procedures

- Confirm permission to audio record interview
- Record interview
- Optional: record interview on secondary and/or third device
- Document anecdotal notes

Post Interview Procedures

- Complete reflection notes memo
- Clean transcript and download into word document
- Write a descriptive summary (member check) and send to participants
- Upload transcript to Deduce
- Pre-Coding using Provisional Code List
- Cycle 1 - Initial/Open Coding (In vivo, Structural, Descriptive, Process)
- Cycle 2 - Selective Coding
- Cycle 3 - Recoding & Pattern Coding

Observation #1

Date: _____

Pre Observation Procedures

- Send calendar invite to confirming time and location
- Confirm observation 24 - 48 hours ahead of time

During Observation Procedures

- Document anecdotal notes
- Ask any follow up questions to support with overall understanding

Post Observation Procedures

- Complete reflection notes memo
- Clean up notes template/descriptive summary
- Upload transcript to Deduce
- Pre-Coding using Provisional Code List
- Cycle 1 - Initial/Open Coding (In vivo, Structural, Descriptive, Process)
- Cycle 2 - Selective Coding
- Cycle 3 - Recoding & Pattern Coding

Observation #2

Date: _____

Pre Observation Procedures

- Send calendar invite to confirming time and location

- Confirm observation 24 - 48 hours ahead of time

During Observation Procedures

- Document anecdotal notes
- Ask any follow up questions to support with overall understanding

Post Observation Procedures

- Complete reflection notes memo
- Clean up notes template/descriptive summary
- Upload transcript to Deduce
- Pre-Coding using Provisional Code List
- Cycle 1 - Initial/Open Coding (In vivo, Structural, Descriptive, Process)
- Cycle 2 - Selective Coding
- Cycle 3 - Recoding & Pattern Coding

Individual Interview #2

Date: _____

Pre Interview Procedures

- Send calendar invite confirming time and location as soon as possible
- Email questions 24 - 48 hours ahead of the scheduled interview
- Confirm meeting 24 - 48 hours ahead of time

During Interview Procedures

- Confirm permission to audio record interview
- Record interview
- Optional: record interview on secondary and/or third device
- Document anecdotal notes

Post Interview Procedures

- Complete reflection notes memo
- Clean transcript and download into word document
- Write a descriptive summary (member check) and send to participants
- Upload transcript to Deduce
- Pre-Coding using Provisional Code List
- Cycle 1 - Initial/Open Coding (In vivo, Structural, Descriptive, Process)
- Cycle 2 - Selective Coding
- Cycle 3 - Recoding & Pattern Coding

Focus Group Interview #2

Date: _____

Pre Interview Procedures

- Send calendar invite confirming time and location as soon as possible
- Email questions 24 - 48 hours ahead of the scheduled interview
- Confirm meeting 24 - 48 hours ahead of time

During Interview Procedures

- Confirm permission to audio record interview
- Record interview
- Optional: record interview on secondary and/or third device
- Document anecdotal notes

Post Interview Procedures

- Complete reflection notes memo
- Clean transcript and download into word document
- Write a descriptive summary (member check) and send to participants

- Upload transcript to Deduce
- Pre-Coding using Provisional Code List
- Cycle 1 - Initial/Open Coding (In vivo, Structural, Descriptive, Process)
- Cycle 2 - Selective Coding
- Cycle 3 - Recoding & Pattern Coding

Appendix U

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 1 MEMBER CHECK TEMPLATE

Directions: Hello participant! Below is a summary from our interview together which contains bullet points and quotes. I am sharing this with you in the event you would like an abbreviated copy of your responses as well as the opportunity to correct anything I may have misrepresented. If there is anything you would like to change please edit the document directly using track changes, a different text color, and/or by making comments in the margins. I suggest spending no more than 5 min of your time on this. If this could be reviewed in one week's time. If I do not get a response back by that time I will consider this information accurate. Thank you!

Participant:	Member Check Sent to Participant on:
Date of Interview:	Participant Approved Member Check on:

Questions:

- 1. Tell me about your commitments to equity and inclusion.**

Participant Notes/Summary:

- 2. Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around fostering cultures of belonging in your context.**

Participant Notes/Summary:

- 3. Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating collaborative communities and practices in your context.**

Participant Notes/Summary:

- 4. Tell me about how you are engaged in discussion and work around creating opportunities for meaningful student engagement opportunities in your context.**

Participant Notes/Summary:

- 5. Tell me about planning to support the inclusion of students with ESN in general education.**

Participant Notes/Summary:

6. As an inclusionary practice leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to fostering educator agency. **Educator agency describes the influence members of a school system have in how they think about and include individuals within a system.*

Participant Notes/Summary:

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7. As an inclusionary practices leader, describe how you understand the scope of your role as it relates to supporting the implementation of scaling and sustainability of inclusive education across the district.

Participant Notes/Summary:

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Appendix V

Explorer Middle School Co-Planning Tool



Team Co-Planning Agenda and Notes: 2023-2024 School Year

Date: __/__/23

Team:

Mission and Vision

Our Purpose at [REDACTED] is to ensure that ALL students learn the essential academic, social, and citizenship skills to be successful in middle school and beyond.

All Means All! At [REDACTED] the needs of the student come first; we will meet those needs through unsurpassed collaboration; no one is big enough to work independently of others; the combined wisdom of one's peers is greater than any individual; and we will use a teamwork approach, share our insights, and take a continuous interest in each other's growth.

Decision-Making

- What do students need in this specific situation?
- What data is driving this decision (standards, student data, evidence-based, understanding of rigor levels)?
- What is the impact (who and what, positive and possible harm)?
- What is the actionable step we can take within what we can control?
- Check-in on the team: What are the polarities? Have all been heard? Have all been respected?

Norms and Protocols: Team Commitments for Engaging the Work

1. Control what we can
2. Show up on time, with materials ready
3. Provide opportunity for each member's input (finger signal to speak)
4. Assume positive intentions
5. Stick to the agenda
6. Fist to five for consensus

Collaborative Team Templates for the 2023-24 School Year

- [Collaboration Team Agreements Template- 2023-2024](#)
- [Team Essential Standards List 2023-24](#)
- [\[REDACTED\] Unit Planning Playbook 23-24](#)
- [Essential Standards Unit_Assess_Calendar Planning Doc](#)

Materials for this meeting: (Hyperlink any electronic resources the team will be accessing)

- Team Calendar
- Unit Plan Document (Calendar / Unpacking Doc / Proficiency Scale) ← link here

General Updates: (5 mins max)

Celebrations:

Immediate needs:

Schedule (10:20-11:05)

Time	Mins.	Activity	
What skill reteach or work completion needs do we have for Intervention Time this week?			
10:25 - 10:30	5	Reteach	
		Extension	
		Work Completion	
Previewing next week's activities - week at a glance			
What structure/co-teaching moves need to be made?			
10:30-10:45	15	Monday	
		Tuesday	
		Wednesday	
		Thursday	
		Friday	
		Learning Target:	
		Entry:	
		Lesson:	
		Practice:	
		Exit:	
		Co-teaching structures:	
		Co-teaching structures:	
		Co-teaching structures:	
		Co-teaching structures:	
		Co-teaching structures:	
What accommodations/supports are needed for each activity?			
10:45-10:55	10	Entry Tasks	
		Lessons	
		Practices	
		Exits	
		Misc./Extend	
Do we have graded events or data input needs from this/next week's learning?			
10:55-11:00	5	Learning Targets	
		Daily Work	
		Essentials	
		Data to Input (MC)	

Next Steps / Action Planning Before Next Planning Meeting				
Action / Activity	Start Date:	Completion Date:	Notes / Indicators of Success	Who is Responsible: