Three's a Team: Increasing Collaboration Among Instructional Assistants, General, and Special Educators Teaching Students with Disabilities

by

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ABSTRACT

Children with cognitive disabilities are frequently included in general education classes to access grade level curriculum and socially interact with peers. To assist with the inclusion of students with disabilities, some schools assign instructional assistants to support general education teachers. However, there is often a lack of planning time or a planning protocol for the general education teachers, special education teachers, and instructional assistant to plan for the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities. This action research project intended to increase the collaboration among instructional assistants, general education teachers, and special education teachers by developing a Community of Practice among the three groups of professionals. The action included a jointly attended professional development opportunity on strategies to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom, followed by monthly structured collaboration meetings in which the team jointly planned for the students with disabilities. Effectiveness of the project was judged using survey and interview questions derived from Theory of Planned Behavior and the self-efficacy construct from Social-Cognitive theory. The implementation of a team planning protocol increased the team's collaboration by positively improving communication and connectivity among the team members.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing family. To Brian, who did more than his fair share of parenting while I "disserated" and who encouraged, comforted, and calmed me as I figured it all out. To Cameron and Paige, who were my inspiration and motivation; my life is better because you are in it. To Kirby and Michelle, who saw more hockey and volleyball games than I did during this process. And finally, to my dad, who I carried in my heart every step of this journey. I love all of you, more than you will ever know. I could only accomplish this intellectually demanding, emotionally trying goal of mine through your undying love, encouragement, patience, and support.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Page

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Introduction

Inclusion is a term used extensively in the field of special education though it has varied definitions. Educators speaking of full inclusion may be referring to children with disabilities receiving their education solely in the general education classroom with no instruction occurring in a separate setting. All of the required services would be delivered in the general education setting (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Others may be speaking of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible (Alquraini & Gut, 2012). This may include spending the majority of the day in the general education setting, but receiving specialized instruction in the special education room. Another variation on inclusion is the practice of educating children with disabilities in a separate classroom from their peers, but joining their general education classmates for social or non-academic times throughout the day (Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

Currently, there are no standardized definitions or expectations of inclusion. However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), one of the laws which governs the provision of special education services in the school system, requires that students with disabilities be educated with their general education peers to the greatest extent possible, unless the nature or severity of the disability prevents it (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The determination about the greatest extent possible is left up to the team of professionals and parents who craft the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the student (Kavale & Forness, 2000). The law fails to mention inclusion. According to TASH, an international association for disability advocacy, inclusion is not about the placement of a child in general education classroom, but about the "sense of belonging to a school community as an equally valued member" (Almazan, 2009, p. 4). For students

with disabilities to be included in a general education classroom, there are three distinct, required components. In addition to the physical placement of the student in the general education classroom, there must be social interactions with peers and meaningful access to the general education curriculum (Almazan, 2009).

According to the most recent data from the fall of 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCE, 2013) reported that only 38.5% of students with autism and 17.9% of students with intellectual disabilities were included in general education classrooms for 80% or more of their day. However, 34.1% of students with autism and 47.7% of students with intellectual disabilities were in special education classrooms for more than 60% of their day and included in general education for less than 40% of the day. This data provides evidence that students with intellectual disabilities and autism spend the majority of their time separated from their peers and are unlikely to receive grade-level instruction.

Many researchers have conducted studies about the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities develop social skills because of the access to peer models (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Sansosti & Sansosti, 2012). Because of increased expectations for grade level content, students with disabilities also made higher academic gains than students with disabilities who received instruction in the pull-out resource setting (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Mortweet et al., 1999). Not only does inclusion benefit the student with disabilities, it also allows for students without disabilities to develop acceptance, practice empathy, acquire unique skills such as sign language (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007), and increase academic achievement (Cole et al., 2004).

Because inclusion occurs in the general education classroom, general education teachers are a critical factor for the success of inclusion of students with disabilities. In a program evaluation of eight elementary and secondary schools, Idol (2006) found that elementary teachers, in general, held positive attitudes towards students with disabilities and were willing to try inclusion. In the secondary school setting, however, the majority of teachers felt that the inclusion of students with disabilities required the presence of another adult, either a special educator or an instructional assistant (Idol, 2006). In a study conducted by Fuchs (2010), elementary teachers largely supported the theoretical idea of inclusion and believed in the possibility for positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities. However, they were not in favor of the actual implementation of inclusion. Their concerns about including students with disabilities in the general education classroom were due to feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities, lacking collaboration with the special education teachers, and missing administrator support (Fuchs, 2010). Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) surveyed elementary and middle school general education teachers about their attitudes towards mainstreaming and found the majority of teachers supported it. They also determined that teachers who held negative attitudes towards inclusion were less likely to utilize strategies that may facilitate mainstreaming (Bender et al., 1995). In looking at the results of these studies combined, the implication is that though general education teachers may feel inclusion is beneficial, they may not feel prepared teach students with disabilities. Students with disabilities may not have successful inclusion experiences when general education teachers feel unprepared to teach them.

Special education teachers are a second vital member of the team required to provide successful inclusion experiences for students with disabilities. Special educators, by definition, have the most training and experience for the instruction of students with disabilities (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999). However, the lack of planning time or structured collaboration methods may prevent special educators from supporting general education teachers in inclusive practices (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Additionally, special educators may not ideologically support inclusion (Cook et al., 1999) or feel prepared to foster inclusive practices (Orr, 2009). As inclusion of students with disabilities has become more common, the roles of special education teachers have evolved. Special education teachers need to collaboratively plan and troubleshoot with other teachers for inclusion to be successful (Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011). They are also responsible for managing the personnel, mainly instructional assistants, used to support the inclusion of students with disabilities (York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke, & Ghere, 2005).

If instructional assistants (IAs) are assigned to support students with disabilities, they are the third critical component of the instructional team. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2003 there were more than 600,000 IAs working in schools, half of whom were supporting children with special needs (Hampden-Thompson, Diehl, & Kinukawa, 2007). Suter and Giangreco (2009) found that 70% of 584 students from 19 schools in six districts who received IA support spent the majority of their day in general education classrooms. Special education teachers characterized these students requiring IA support as having moderate to severe behavioral or intellectual disabilities (Suter & Giangreco, 2009) requiring the IAs' primary roles as

either providing behavior and social supports or implementing teacher-planned instruction (Fisher & Pleasants, 2011; Suter & Giangreco, 2009). IAs working with students with disabilities are expected to deliver instruction, modify materials, implement behavior plans, and provide personal care (Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig-Westat, 2002). In a study conducted in 2006, 19 of 22 IAs who worked in K-12 schools "indicated a responsibility for their student or group of students that included lesson planning, teaching, creating and administering tests, and grading"(Patterson, 2006, p. 6). According to these studies, IAs play a prominent role in the education of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

With so many IAs assuming responsibilities normally reserved for teachers with specialized education in instructional practices, researchers have conducted studies examining IAs' preparation to perform these duties. In a recent study about the knowledge, responsibilities, and training of IAs working in elementary and secondary schools, IAs reported that a majority of the training was on-the-job training, whereas only a small percentage of IAs received trainings from an in-service offering or by attending a conference (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2008). In a survey of 202 IAs working in elementary and secondary settings, more than 60% reported that their initial training did not include the teachers with whom they worked (Malian, 2011). Additionally, only 26% of 1,742 IAs surveyed spent time planning with a general education teacher (Fisher & Pleasants, 2011). Malian (2011) found that the majority of IAs spent less than 15 minutes per week collaborating with the teachers with whom they work. According to Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005), "the support of an untrained paraprofessional can have

negative consequences that actually undermine the original social and academic goals of inclusion" (p. 432).

To foster more inclusive practices, two prominent researchers have counseled schools to examine and refine their current systems (Giangreco, 2010, 2013; Lasater, Johnson, & Fitzgerald, 2000). Their advice included providing initial and ongoing training for the IA, general education, and special education teachers which would include clarifying roles and responsibilities for the IA and teachers. Further recommendations included capacity building for general education teachers to increase their ability to include students with disabilities through the use of universal design, differentiation, and assistive technology (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Giangreco, 2010, 2013). Special education teachers in inclusive settings need to enhance their abilities in collaborative teaming, instructional modifications, and development of peer supports (Fisher, Frey, & Thousand, 2003). Instruction for both general education teachers and IAs on implementing peer supports and teaching independence was also suggested (Giangreco, 2013; Lasater et al., 2000). Implementation of these recommendations should enhance the effectiveness of inclusive settings.

Local Context

Caring Elementary School District is a suburban district with 17,855 students, 1,471 of whom are identified as students with disabilities. I am a teacher specialist in my district's Student Learning and Support Services department. My job responsibilities include mentoring new special education teachers, assisting all special education teachers in writing and implementing compliant Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and providing training on adopted curriculum materials. I am also on the committee

responsible for the allocation of IA hours for each of the schools. After the hours are allocated, I work with teams on scheduling and training the IAs. It was through this work that I became interested in how to increase the effectiveness of IAs who support students with disabilities.

In the first round of action research for this project, I interviewed four IAs from one elementary school about their perceptions of job responsibilities, training opportunities, and collaboration efforts as they supported students with disabilities in general education classrooms. These IAs supported students with autism, mild intellectual disability, blindness, and emotional disabilities. My analysis of the interviews revealed that IAs do not have opportunities to meet with either the general educators or the special educators to discuss the necessary supports for the children with whom they work. There is limited time during the day for discussions between the special education teachers and the IAs for the modeling of instructional strategies and providing feedback. The IAs also do not have scheduled times to meet with the general education teachers for planning. The IAs struggle with finding the balance between fostering students' independence and supporting students' work completion. The IAs voiced that the classroom assignments are often not adapted by classroom teachers and are too challenging for the student with disabilities to complete independently. Furthermore, the IAs reported having attended district level trainings offered once a year on staff development day, but not having sustained and ongoing professional development opportunities. The biggest concern of the IAs was limited communication between the general and special education teachers with whom they worked. My next goal was to

learn about the experience of having IAs in the classroom from the perspective of general education teachers.

In the Fall 2014 cycle of this action research project, I interviewed five general education elementary teachers about their experiences with inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities who had IA support in their classrooms. The results showed considerable variability among teachers about their experiences and understandings of the reasons to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. For example, when asked about the purpose for including children with cognitive disabilities in the general education class, the answer most often cited was, "for social reasons." The teachers had limited academic expectations for students with cognitive disabilities. For one teacher, her biggest concern was how to modify assignments for students with cognitive disabilities so that it was at the appropriate level, but still related to the grade-level standards taught, practiced, and assessed in the classroom. The general education teachers also reported that they relied on the IA to make behavioral and academic accommodations for students with disabilities because they did not have designated time for discussing students' needs in relation to classroom expectations. Because I had heard from IAs and general education teachers, I explored the experience from the perspective of special education teachers.

In separate interviews with three special education teachers during Fall 2014, I learned that they often do not plan instruction collaboratively with the general education teachers. The special education teachers typically remain in their resource classrooms teaching during the times IAs accompany students to their general education classrooms. In an interview with one of the special education teachers, she expressed concern about

not being able to help general education teachers to include students with cognitive disabilities academically as well as socially. She relied on the IA to transmit information between special education teachers and the general education teachers about student behaviors or academic needs. Another special education teacher noted that she attempted to plan with her IAs, but the planning time never actually came to fruition due to other demands on her time. As a result of the lack of planning time, she admits that she relies heavily on the IAs to make important decisions in the classroom. The special education teachers' lack of planning time with the IAs or general education teachers created an inability for sharing of their expertise in curriculum adaptions to benefit children with disabilities which contributes to the problem of practice.

I learned from these previous cycles of action research that all of the professionals acknowledged the lack of collaboration among team members. The planning for students with disabilities, if it happened at all, occurred in passing or on the spot. Furthermore, in a review of literature about successful inclusion practices, Alquraini and Gut (2012) found collaboration to be essential for the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) concluded that a collaborative environment among teachers increased student achievement. As a result of the lack of planning, children with disabilities were most often physically and socially included in classrooms, but not academically included. Therefore, the problem of practice for the present study is the lack of a collaborative environment and shared responsibility among the general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs to support students with disabilities included in general education classrooms to make academic, social, and behavioral growth.

I conducted this action research project to explore the use of a professional development course and a structured team meeting format to foster increased collaboration as a means to physically, socially, and academically include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education environment. For the purposes of this project, a cognitive disability is defined as "significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The following research questions guided the action research:

- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general, and special education teachers?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectation for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress?

My role in this action research study is complex in terms of positionality. I am a special education teacher specialist in the district. My job is to support the special education teachers in writing and implementing compliant IEPs. I also possess expertise in making adaptations to curriculum for students with disabilities. As a teacher specialist, I am a peer to the special education teachers and IAs. Because I have worked closely with

them, I am considered an insider. Though I possess no supervisory responsibilities for any members of the team, I may be viewed as "district office personnel," and thus an outsider. Because the idea for the intervention originated from my previous cycles of action research and not from the participants themselves, I will be an outsider in collaboration with insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2015). My desire for this study is that the participants and I will be co-learning, in that we share our "knowledge to create new understanding and work together to form action plans with outsider [my] facilitation" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 51).

Theoretical Framework

The sections above highlighted the challenges of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms occurring at the national level followed by the problem of practice in my local context. These problems led to the creation of the research questions for this study. In order to address the challenges teachers and IAs described associated with meaningful collaboration, I researched theoretical frameworks to help both clarify the problem and inform the innovation. This section will begin with an examination of three theories: Theory of Planned Behavior, Social-Cognitive Theory, and Communities of Practice. After each theory is explained, I will clarify the theory's connections to this research project.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a framework that explains the connection between attitudes and behaviors. Ajzen (1991) posits that all behavior begins with an intention to perform the specified behavior. This intention can be predicted by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to a person's

beliefs about a behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). If a person possesses positive beliefs, he or she is more likely to perform the behavior. If, however, an individual holds negative beliefs about a behavior, he or she is less likely to perform the behavior. Integral to attitudes are subjective norms. Subjective norms are the social factors associated with performing a behavior. More specifically, they refer to the perceived level of approval or disapproval from others in the community. The more favorable a person believes others feel about an action the more likely it is for him or her to perform that action. The final component is perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control is a person's perception of the level of challenge involved in a task or behavior. In determining the difficulty of performing a behavior, an individual also considers the available resources, skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to be successful. If an individual believes that an action will result in success, he or she is more likely to engage in the behavior. The more positively a person perceives these three components, the more likely he or she is to engage in the behavior.

TPB informed my literature review and part of my data collection methods. According to TPB, teachers' attitudes towards including students with cognitive disabilities is a predictive factor in determining whether teachers will perform the behaviors necessary to include students. So if a team member does not believe students with cognitive disabilities should be in the general education classroom, he or she may not make modifications or collaborate to make inclusion successful. Closely tied with the beliefs are subjective norms or how others perceive the behavior. In this research project, I expected that by increasing collaboration I would positively influence the subjective norms regarding inclusion. These subjective norms are expected to increase the

likelihood that behaviors that promote inclusive practices will occur. The last predictive element of performing a behavior is perceived behavioral control. By increasing collaboration between general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs, all members of the team are engaging in a social learning opportunity to enhance their skills in inclusive practices. With increased knowledge, skills, and resources, perceived behavioral control will likely improve leading to the increased likelihood of implementation of inclusive practices. Perceived behavior control is closely connected to self-efficacy, the second theoretical framework.

Social-Cognitive Theory

A second theory, closely related to the perceived behavioral control aspect of the Theory of Planned Behavior, is Bandura's concept of self-efficacy from his Social-Cognitive Theory (Ajzen, 1991). Bandura defines "perceived self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capability to produce desired results through their own actions" (Krapp, 2005, p. 46). Thus, a person's beliefs influence his or her actions, efforts, motivations, and thoughts (Bandura, 1993). Personal self-efficacy is important as it will influence how teachers or IAs will approach problem solving and their use of abilities and resources. As Krapp (2005) explained, "a person's beliefs, thoughts, and feelings combine to determine an individual's actions" (p. 40).

With respect to teaching, two components combine to create teacher self-efficacy, which is "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). The first aspect, self-perception of teaching competency, occurs when teachers analyze their own skill, knowledge, or

strategies and make a judgment about their ability as a teacher (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The second component of self-efficacy is context specific. A teacher may feel more or less efficacious teaching a particular subject, grade level, setting, or type of student (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Consideration of these two factors is part of the analysis of the teaching task. Together, these two constructs are combined to create teacher efficacy, which is developed through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional reactions. (Bandura, 1993).

In this research project, increasing teacher self-efficacy is very important. General education teachers may perceive that they lack the knowledge or skills to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. They may feel efficacious in teaching students without disabilities, but may feel less efficacious when teaching students with disabilities. This same tenet holds true for special education teachers. They may feel very efficacious in teaching students with disabilities in their classroom. As the context changes and they are responsible for assisting in the general education classroom, their level of teacher self-efficacy may decline. Self-efficacy of IAs, in their role of supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities, is a relatively new area of exploration. Efficacy, or the perception of how successful one will be in performing a behavior, is important to explore as it is one of TPB's predictive factors. According to Bandura (1993), self-efficacy is influenced by mastery experiences and social persuasion. This project explored the development of a social learning framework, Communities of Practice, as a means of increasing both social acceptability and successful encounters with inclusive practices, with the ultimate goal of increasing teachers' self-efficacy.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice (CoP), a social learning framework developed by Wenger (1998), "are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). A CoP is distinct from a group because a CoP has three crucial elements: the domain, the community, and the practice (Wenger, 2011). Membership in a CoP is determined by a shared interest, which comprises the domain of the CoP (Wenger, 1999). As members mutually engage in activities, discussions, and problem solving, they are building relationships within the community. As a result of being practitioners, the CoP members develop a shared repertoire of resources, artifacts, and tools that enhance the knowledge base of the practice. An effective CoP is one where the members spend time together to "share information, insight, and advice. They help each other solve problems. They discuss their situation, their aspirations, and their needs. They ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002. p. 4). In a CoP, learning occurs as a result of participation in a social world with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Giangreco (2010, 2013) recommends trainings occur with all team members present to foster inclusive practices. Therefore, developing a CoP offers a viable procedure for the current action research study. A CoP that includes special education teachers, general education teachers, and IAs could increase inclusion experiences for the student with cognitive disabilities and should be of high interest. By engaging in problem solving, attempting new strategies, and analyzing the results, teachers and IAs are participating in mastery experiences, a way to develop one's teaching efficacy (Bandura,

1993). As the team members are engaging in discussion and creating knowledge about their practice, they are developing relationships, or a community, among themselves. This community becomes a social persuasion experience, another factor which can change teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). The development of a Community of Practice is an essential element in increasing collaboration, teacher self-efficacy, and outcomes for students with cognitive disabilities.

Literature Review

The previous section examined the theoretical framework that guided the present study. The following section explores inclusive practices in relationship to each of the theories previously examined. First, I discuss research describing the attitudes and teacher efficacy of general education teachers, including professional development recommendations to enhance teacher efficacy. Second, I address the role of special education teachers in inclusive settings and explore the literature on special education teachers' attitudes and efficacy for inclusive practices. Third, I examine the role of IAs in inclusive settings along with outlining detrimental and positive outcomes associated with the use of IAs. Finally, this section will conclude with research conducted about collaboration.

General Education Teachers

In inclusive settings, students with disabilities are in classrooms with typically developing peers. The instructional leader of such settings are the general education teachers. General education teachers know grade-level standards, plan instructional activities to achieve these standards, foster relationships among the students, and develop a classroom community. General education teachers' attitudes (Bender et al., 1995;

Glazzard, 2011; Hwang & Evans, 2011; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Wilczenski, 1995) and efficacy (Dawson & Scott, 2013; Urton, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014) are paramount to the success of the inclusion experience. For the purposes of this research, attitude is defined as the teacher's feeling or beliefs about inclusion. In accordance with the Theory of Planned Behavior, how general education teachers feel about inclusion may predict their actions in the classroom.

Many researchers have explored general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. In a study conducted in one primary school in England examining the barriers to inclusion, Glazzard (2011) identified attitudinal barriers as the primary obstacle. He noted personally held beliefs about disabilities, risk-taking, and flexibility in adapting instruction as dimensions of attitudes which influenced inclusion. If teachers do not believe the child is worth the effort, will make progress, or can conform to their class structure, the inclusion experience will not be successful. Alternatively, having an open attitude, believing in the child, and adjusting instruction as needed were identified to be a necessity for the inclusion of a child with special needs (Mortier, Hunt, Leroy, Van de Putte, & Van Hove, 2010). Bender et al. (1995) conducted a study comparing teachers' attitudes towards mainstreaming to the use of effective instructional strategies. They found that teachers who had more favorable attitudes towards mainstreaming were more likely to effectively use instructional strategies to benefit students with disabilities.

According to Urton et al. (2014), teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by teacher self-efficacy. Various studies have uncovered the reasons that teachers may not feel efficacious in teaching students with disabilities. For example, in a study conducted in Korea, Hwang and Evans (2011) found that limited skill and

knowledge regarding inclusion were reasons general education teachers were reluctant to teach students with disabilities. General education teachers self-identified lack of confidence in their abilities to "adapt materials and curriculum, manage behavior, and give instructional assistance" (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-Mccormick, & Scheer, 1999, p. 153) for students with disabilities. Horne, Timmons, and Adamowycz (2008) include lack of planning time to adequately prepare for students with disabilities as another factor influencing teacher efficacy for inclusion. In Glazzard's (2011) study, teachers reported a desire to have availability of classroom support from other personnel to effectively include students with disabilities.

Teachers can learn instructional strategies that have been found to be beneficial for students with disabilities, and as a result, increase their self-efficacy for inclusion. The learning can come from coursework, professional development opportunities, or experience. One study, in which pre-service teachers completed a 30-hour course about students with disabilities, showed a significant increase in their attitudes towards inclusion between pre- and post-test scores (Shade & Stewart, 2001). Ernst and Rogers (2009) found that when high school teachers engaged in professional development about special education and had experience teaching in an inclusive setting, they expressed more positive feelings about inclusion. Buell et al. (1999) surveyed 289 kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers about their professional development needs to include students with disabilities. Analysis of the results showed that teachers wanted additional training on adapting curriculum or materials, assessing progress, managing student behavior, and using assistive technology (Buell et al., 1999). Additional instructional strategies shown to be effective in teaching students with disabilities are Universal

Design for Learning, cooperative learning, inquiry learning, peer supports, and response prompting (Alquraini & Gut, 2012). To increase general education teacher efficacy, professional development should focus on the strategies shown most effective when instructing students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Special Education Teachers

The job requirements of special education teachers vary from those of general education teachers**.** Special education teachers must be masters of the content knowledge of special education which includes the characteristics of students with disabilities, the law governing students with disabilities, curriculum adaptations, and instructional strategies (Sayeski, 2009). According to Sayeski (2009) and Eisenman et al. (2011), special education teachers have the responsibility to educate general education teachers about the characteristics of students with disabilities and provide instructional strategies to accommodate students with learning differences. Through the use of tools such as disability fact sheets, IEP planning guides, and lists of accommodations, special education teachers are also responsible for developing collaborative plans to support the students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom (Sayeski, 2009).

Eisenman et al. (2011) found that the job responsibilities for special education teachers have shifted from teaching remediation lessons in separate rooms to providing coaching for inclusion. In one study, special educators from elementary and secondary schools defined their primary responsibilities as developing IEPs, coordinating implementation, instructing students with disabilities, and supervising IAs (York-Barr et al., 2005). Fisher et al. (2003) recommend that special education teachers have expertise in curriculum modifications, positive behavioral supports, and assistive technology.

Moreover, they must be experts in collaboration in order to assist elementary and secondary general education teachers in utilizing these supports in the general education classroom (Fisher et al., 2003; Sayeski, 2009).

Special education teachers' attitudes and efficacy towards inclusion are likely important predictors of whether they will promote an inclusive environment. Yasutake and Lerner (1996) conducted a survey with 255 elementary, middle, and high school teachers in which they compared general and special education teachers' views of inclusion. Their results found that special education teachers had a more optimistic view. In a survey conducted to compare the perceptions of K-12 general and special education teachers, Buell et al. (1999) found that special education teachers expressed a high level of confidence and felt prepared to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Special education teachers, however, felt that their counterparts, general education teachers, did not have the necessary skills to include students with disabilities (Cook et al., 1999). A careful review of literature failed to find any studies examining the special education teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices. The majority of studies of self-efficacy for inclusion of students with disabilities has been conducted with general education teachers. In analyzing the literature about special education teachers' roles in an inclusive school, it can be recommended that special education teachers serve as leaders in implementation of inclusive practices (Sayeski, 2009; York-Barr et al., 2005), but there is a lack of research about their efficacy in doing so.

Instructional Assistants

The use and roles of IAs in inclusive schools have been examined from many perspectives. The increase in the number of IAs working with students with disabilities

has been defined as “an explosion” (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002) and has been well documented in the literature (Giangreco, 2010; Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010; Hoyano, Woodyard, & Koch, 2012). These researchers attributed the increase in the use of IAs to growth in the number of students with disabilities who are being placed in the general education classroom (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005; Giangreco, 2013). The role of the IA has evolved to become more instructional in nature. IAs are responsible for planning and teaching students academics (Giangreco et al., 2002; Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Patterson, 2006) or providing social or behavioral support (Patterson, 2006). However, there may be unintended consequences as a result of using IAs to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The detrimental effects of IA support are well documented in the literature. For example, in a study analyzing the effects of proximity of IAs to students with disabilities, Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli and MacFarland (1997) observed 11 students with deaf-blindness who were supported by IAs in multiple settings over a two-year span. Their findings showed the students were more likely to experience “interference with ownership by the general education teacher, separation from classmates, dependence on adults, impact on peer interactions, loss of personal control, and loss of gender identity” (Giangreco et al., 1997, p. 11). In another survey of IAs working in elementary, middle, and high schools, IAs mentioned concern over reduced interactions between the general education teachers and students with disabilities (Fisher & Pleasants, 2011). In a study measuring teacher-to-student and IA-to-student interactions, results showed reduced interactions between teachers and students with disabilities (Rubie-Davies, Blatchford, Webster, Koutsoubou, & Bassett, 2010). Qualitatively and quantitatively inferior

interactions between classroom teachers and students with disabilities are likely to lead to the relinquished responsibility for students with special needs by general education teachers (Cook, 2004).

Academically and socially, students with disabilities appear to be at risk when there is an overreliance on IAs. Based on recent findings, the delivery of instruction by IAs has been seen as problematic because the more support students receive from an IA, the lower their academic progress was in mathematics, science, and English (Blatchford et al., 2011; Webster & Blatchford, 2010). Similarly, in social situations, students with disabilities were also at a disadvantage with the support of IAs. For example, peer interactions were likely inhibited when IAs were present. In a study conducted to measure interactions by a student with emotional disabilities, results showed that 29 of the 32 recorded interactions with peers took place when an IA was not in close proximity (Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006). Giangreco and Broer (2005) explored the school wide practices of IAs and found that IAs reported spending 86% of their time within three feet of the assigned student. These practices led to the development of student dependence on IAs. The authors of these studies did not delineate the level of training the IAs received.

Some research results have documented interventions which provide positive effects for students working with IAs in the general education classroom. Causton-Theoharis, Giangreco, Doyle and Vadasy's (2007) research results showed increases in students' reading achievement when IAs were specifically trained in behavior management along with the use of a targeted reading intervention. The reading intervention was used as a supplement to the regular instruction. The IAs were provided

continuous monitoring and feedback during their implementation. In another study, Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005) concluded that IAs could be trained to facilitate social interactions between students with severe disabilities and their peers. After a four-hour training session, IAs fostered peer interactions that were on average 25 times greater following the training. These increases in positive outcomes for students with disabilities occurred only after IAs received the specific training

Collaboration

Several authors in the field of inclusive education emphasize the importance of collaboration between team members for inclusion to be most successful (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Buell et al., 1999; Fuchs, 2010; Horne et al., 2008; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991). The purpose of collaboration is to increase the quality and effectiveness of an inclusive program (Alquraini & Gut, 2012) by planning for and accommodating students with disabilities while planning for the whole class (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Glazzard (2011) emphasizes an important outcome of collaboration is the development of "a shared understanding of what constitutes inclusion" (p. 61). Ernst and Rogers (2009) reported that when general education teachers had more access to special education teachers, their attitudes towards inclusion were positively impacted.

Jones (2012) defines collaboration between special education teachers, general education teachers, and IAs as a way of providing "effective communication, cooperation, joint problem solving and planning, and finding solutions" (p. 297). According to Jones (2012), collaboration is critical if students with disabilities are to be successful in general education classrooms. To assist in the implementation of the IEP by multiple people and across varied settings, Jones developed "IEP at a Glance," a tool

intended to outline accommodations, goals, and service times on one document. Jones also developed an "Inclusion Running Record," which highlights the support students need and the activities completed to facilitate communication between the parties. Having a regularly scheduled instructional planning meeting was found to be an essential element in building collaboration and increasing academic and social achievement for students with disabilities (Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012). Williamson and McLeskey (2011) found that by instituting an inclusion problem solving team, general education teachers had social support, learned practical strategies, and engaged in reflection on classroom practices.

Collaboration, as defined by Ferguson, Ralph and Katul (1996), "means two or more people create an outcome for a student that no one of them could have created alone" (p. 34). This quote is illustrated quite well in the research conducted by two researcher groups. Both groups measured the effects of social interactions and academic engagement for students at-risk and identified with disabilities when a team of teachers implemented a specific collaboration tool (Hunt, Doering, Hirose-Hatae, Maier, & Goetz, 2001; Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003). The team, which included a general education teacher, special educator, IA, and parent met monthly to discuss the identified students and develop a Unified Plan of Support (UPS) in which specific supports were detailed for each academic area along with the delineation of the person responsible (Hunt et al., 2001, 2003). Peer interactions and student engagement, as measured by researchers' observations, increased with the implementation of the UPS. Moreover, the students made academic gains that were documented by the qualitative data reported by the teachers. The authors noted that the "UPS teaming process made it possible to focus

efforts on those students who required intensive and comprehensive plans of support for success and provided the general education teacher with additional resources to implement the support plans" (Hunt et al., 2001, p. 254).

This review of literature highlights strengths and needs for the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. General education teachers are experts of their grade-level standards, yet they need assistance with modifying curriculum for students with disabilities. Special education teachers are experts about disabilities, yet they may not know how to be leaders in inclusive practices. With the lack of planning time, IAs are left to make instructional decisions about students with disabilities included in general education classrooms. To make inclusion work, all team members have to collaborate for the success of students with disabilities. This action research project is about developing a Community of Practice which uses a team planning protocol to increase collaboration. The expected outcome was to increase teacher efficacy for inclusive practices among all team members.

Innovation Action Plan

For the first step of the action plan for this innovation, I conducted a three-hour training entitled, "Instructional Strategies for Students with Cognitive Disabilities." I taught this class in July of 2015 to the kindergarten teachers, special educators, and IAs from Breeze Elementary, as well as other educators throughout the district. The learning goal of this class was for participants to understand and implement inclusive practices which allow a student with cognitive disabilities to make academic progress in the general education environment. More specifically, I wanted the participants to learn

strategies to adapt classroom activities to allow for meaningful participation for students with cognitive disabilities.

To achieve this goal, I began the class by defining and exemplifying inclusive practices, as defined by Downing (2010). In this definition, inclusive education is characterized by equal membership, shared ownership, expectations for learning, and positive and rich learning environments with necessary supports for all students. Next, the class explored aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which governs special education in the United States. I explained the concepts of presumed competence (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2007) and the least dangerous assumption (Jorgensen, 2005) as a means of setting the expectation that students with cognitive disabilities can learn in the general education classroom. In the next portion of the training, I differentiated between two specific types of adaptations to the curriculum: accommodations and modifications. This information was followed by an in-depth exploration of the Nine Types of Curriculum Adaptations (Browning Wright, 2005). Browning Wright (2005) highlights nine strategies which teachers can utilize to differentiate instruction for all students. Some specific strategies include consciously adapting time, quantity, difficulty, participation, or level of support in order for students with disabilities to access education. Two additional adaptations are input, the way in which student learns information, and output, the way in which students demonstrate understanding. Browning Wright's (2005) adaptations also includes substitute curriculum and alternate goals as two specific modifications for students with cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments. As part of the exploration of these strategies, I shared specific examples of each adaptation for students with cognitive disabilities.

For the remainder of the course, I described and exemplified a framework entitled Routines-Based Planning developed by Jorgensen and Lambert (2012) in which the classroom routines and student's IEP goals are utilized to plan for the student in general education classrooms. The idea in using Routines-Based Planning is that the routines of the classroom are similar while the individual activities vary from day to day. In the Routines-Based Planning, the team first analyzes the expectations, or routines, of students without disabilities. Then the team focuses on which of the steps in the routine students with disabilities can complete. The primary emphasis on what the students can complete moves the team in the direction of presumed competence. Next, the team explores and answers the question of what is preventing the student with disabilities from participating in the activity. Based on that information, the team develops supports using the Nine Types of Curriculum Adaptions (Browning Wright, 2005) to address the identified deficit preventing the student from participating.

Beginning in July 2015 and continuing monthly until December 2015, the team met to participate in hour-long structured collaboration meetings. The goals of the collaboration time were developing supports to be implemented to enable students to make academic, social, and behavioral gains in a manner which also encourages independence. At each meeting, the team decided upon one time of the day to examine classroom routines and analyze the targeted students' abilities and deficits in relation to that routine. To allow for the creation of new knowledge, the collaboration time focused on team sharing, problem solving and developing an action plan for the upcoming weeks. At subsequent meetings, the team reflected on the success of the supports and modified the supports accordingly. The team utilized a modified version of the Routine-Based

Planning Form (Downing, 2009; Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012) and the Unified Plan of Support used in other research studies (Hunt et al., 2001, 2003; Mortier et al., 2009; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy, Van de Putte, & Van Hove, 2010). The initial meeting was spent learning how to use the tools, while ensuing meetings were spent reflecting on the plans and creating new ones. See Appendix A and B for both documents.

As a teacher on special assignment, I joined the team of IAs, general education teachers, and special education teachers to facilitate planning conversations about supports two students with cognitive disabilities needed to participate in the general education curriculum with their peers. As part of the team, I engaged in conversations about the students' abilities and deficits by asking questions to clarify the team's thinking. I also suggested and assisted the team in creating supports. My goal was to develop capacity within the team so my level of participation varied as their abilities and efficacy grew. My role in this innovation was researcher, participant, and facilitator of the planning conversation.

Methods

The previous section explained the innovation that I implemented during the fall of 2015-2016 school year. The following section explains the data collection methods used to answer the research questions and evaluate the innovation. First, I discuss the components of a mixed method action research study and why it is appropriate for this present study. Second, I explain the participants and setting for this research project. Next, I address the four data collection tools used. Finally, I elaborate on the analysis methods for each of the data collection tools.

Action Research

The most appropriate research method for this study is action research. The strength in action research is its ability to empower those who are participating in the efforts. Through the process of interacting and solving problems for students with disabilities, the general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs will have opportunities to reflect on their practices and revise those not fostering the desired outcomes for the students with cognitive disabilities. Furthermore, through this dialogue leading to the evolution of practices and beliefs, action research will be transformative for the participants (Grogan, Donaldson, & Simmons, 2007). Most importantly, the use of action research will be a system for the team of adults serving the student with cognitive disabilities to solve problems, try a solution, revisit, and revise it based on results, solid theories, and understandings about teaching and learning (Riel, 2010). Moreover, the collaborative nature of action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010) is likely to have the most influence on student performance in academic and social settings.

I conducted an action research study with a convergent mixed method design for the purpose of complementarity. Mixed methods research is the combination of "quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language in a single study" (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006, p. 69). The study mixed the quantitative Likert scales in a survey with qualitative interviews, document analysis, and meeting transcript analysis. By using mixed methods, I more completely answered the research questions and developed a more extensive picture of the social phenomena of the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Mixed methods research conducted for the purpose of complementarity

is where the researcher is "seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22). In my research, I examined the data from each of the methods to provide more information. For example, the Likert scale Inclusive Practices Survey provides levels of agreement for each of the statements. In the interviews, I probed for examples and supporting reasons that will complement the information gleaned from survey.

As an action researcher, my role was a unique combination of being both an insider and outsider to the school environment. Breeze Elementary School (BES) is the school in my district where I had previously been a teacher. Because of this relationship, I was an insider as I already had relationships with most of the team members. A level of trust and mutual respect was already established. However, I have been working as a Teacher Specialist at the district level for seven years, which placed me as an outsider to the daily happenings of the school. Additionally, I did not have any knowledge of the students except through the information shared at the team meetings and in the most current Individual Education Plans (IEPs). I viewed my role in this project as an outsider in collaboration with insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2015) as the team worked with the students each and every day, and I only attended the monthly team meetings.

Participants and Setting

The participants for this research included the principal, special education and general education teachers, along with IAs at BES. BES is a preschool through fifth grade school with a population of 813 students, 62 of whom qualify for special education services. The school services its students with disabilities using a pull-out model. The

students spend the majority of their day in the general education classroom and receive remediation instruction in the resource classroom. BES has two certified special education teachers and one speech language pathologist on site. Additionally, BES has four IAs who support some students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Students in grades K-5 at BES qualify for special education services under the categories of emotional disability (1), hearing impairment (1), autism (6), other health impairment (3), developmental delay (3), specific learning disability (10), and speech language impairment (24). For each student with disabilities, the teachers, parents, and service providers write an IEP, which outlines the goals, accommodations, amount of time in the special education resource classroom, and times IA support will be provided.

There were nine participants, who all gave informed consent, in this proposed research study. The consent letter can be found in Appendix C. These adults were specifically selected to participate as they comprise the team who will be teaching two kindergarten students with cognitive disabilities in an inclusive setting. The participants were the two kindergarten teachers and the two special education teachers who instruct the children at various times during the school day. The study also included four IAs who support the children in the general education classroom throughout the school day. Finally, the school principal was included to garner her perspective of the effects of the collaboration on her staff and students, as well as the feasibility of continuing the structured collaboration time. All teachers and IAs participated in the surveys, the professional development opportunity, the monthly meetings, and the interviews. The principal was invited to the professional development and monthly meetings, but only

chose to participate in the interview. Table 1 documents the participants and their accompanying demographic information.

Table 1

Participant Information

Teacher Pseudonym	Role	# of Years in Education	Highest Degree Level
Mrs. Y	Kindergarten Teacher	30	Bachelor's
Mrs. F	Kindergarten Teacher	27	Master's
Ms. T	Special Education Teacher	1	Master's
Ms. A	Special Education Teacher	5	Master's
Ms. M	IA	2	High School
Mrs. S	IA	16	High School
Mrs. C	IA	11	High School
Mrs. P	IA	4	Bachelor's
Mrs. W	Principal	23	Master's

The students who benefitted from this research are two girls who qualify for services under the category of developmental delay. Kerri, a pseudonym, is a six year old girl with Down syndrome who is currently in kindergarten. At the behest of the parents, the team agreed to retain Kerri for the 2015-2016 school year. Though she has the same kindergarten and special education teachers for her retention year, the IAs who worked with her are different. She currently spends the majority of her day in the kindergarten

classroom, but attends the resource room for instruction in reading, writing, and math. The special education teacher provides behavior support within the kindergarten classroom as well. There is an IA assigned to Kerri's teacher to assist during toileting, lunch, recess, academic work, and transitions. Kerri is currently learning to say the sounds of the letters, count to 25, and write the letters of the alphabet. Kerri's IEP includes behavior supports designed to assist Kerri in following directions and transitioning with her class.

Ann, also a pseudonym, is a five year old kindergarten girl who qualifies for special education under the category of developmental delay. Like Kerri, she spends the majority of her day in the general education classroom. She receives pull-out instruction in reading, writing, math, and speech language for four and a half hours a week. Ann began kindergarten being able to count to 11 and identify five letters of the alphabet. The team reported no behavioral or social concerns for Ann. There is an IA assigned to Ann's teacher to assist in her in English language arts and math instruction, as well as during transitions.

Data Collection

There were four sources of data collection, all approved by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) and Caring School District Review Board, used to answer the research questions. IRB approval can be found in Appendix D. The next section will explain each of the data collection tools inventoried in Table 2 below, as well as the method of analysis.

Table 2

Data Collection Tools and Inventory

Instrument	Description	Inventory
Inclusion Survey Pre and Post (Quantitative)	Explores constructs of collaboration, beliefs, and efficacy using Likert scale statements. Pre-test administered prior to the start of the professional development class Post-test administered in December 2015	1 Pre/Post per participant Total: 16 Surveys
Monthly Meetings (Qualitative)	Audio recording of the classroom routines, students' strengths and needs in regard to the routines, development of support plan, and reflection of the implementation of those plans.	4 monthly meetings Total: 345 minutes
	Artifact: Unified Plan of Support document One created at each monthly meeting for each student	Total: 8 documents
Semi-Structured Interview (Qualitative)	Explore experiences with the team planning, discuss students' progress, and changes in teaching practice and efficacy. 60 minute interviews conducted in November 2015	9 interviews Total: 487 minutes
Field Notes/Journal (Qualitative)	To track process, themes explored, researcher reflections over time	16 pages 4,920 words

Inclusion survey. The participants electronically completed a 27-question Likert scale survey. I designed the survey, based on inclusive practices surveys written by other researchers (Brandes, McWhirter, Haring, Crowson, & Millsap, 2015; Lee, 2013; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012) to measure three constructs related to the theoretical frameworks and the problem of practice. The first construct of the survey specifically

addressed purposes for collaboration. The second construct focused on beliefs about inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. The final construct concentrated on the participants' beliefs about their own efficacy in implementing inclusive practices in the classroom. Within each of the constructs, statements were framed to address social, academic, behavioral, and independence needs of children with cognitive disabilities. I piloted the Inclusion Survey in spring 2015 and calculated the Cronbach's alpha for each construct. An in-depth explanation of each construct along with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient from the pilot and current population will be explained below. The complete survey can be found in Appendix E.

As part of this survey, I also collected demographic information for each participant. The primary information from this portion of the survey delineated the professional role of the participant. I specifically asked the participant to identify their role as a general education teacher, special education teacher, or IA. This allowed me to compare data among the roles. I also asked the participants about their highest level of education, as well as, the number and content of classes or professional development opportunities they have taken on teaching students with cognitive disabilities. I also asked about their experiences with students with cognitive disabilities. The last two questions explored the length of time the person has been in education and in their current position.

The statements for the construct of collaboration were based on the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Scale (TEIP) developed by Sharma et al. (2012). Their scale measured teachers' efficacies for collaboration, inclusive instruction, and managing student behavior. I adapted some of their collaboration items to reflect the purposes of

collaboration among the members of the school team. More specifically, I examined if the team collaborates to provide academic, social, or behavioral supports for students with cognitive disabilities. This construct consisted of eight four-point Likert scale statements to which the participants rated their level of agreement with the anchors "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Each sentence began with the stem of "I collaborate with members of the child's team to" and ends with concepts such as adapt classroom materials, plan for instruction, provide social interactions, or implement behavior plans. In addition, this construct included three open-ended questions exploring the frequency of collaboration and expected outcomes of a structured collaboration time. The final question enabled the participant to add any other pertinent information that I did not ask about. I developed this construct to gather data to answer the first research question about the influence of a team planning protocol on collaboration. During the pilot administration of the survey, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the construct of collaboration was 0.73 indicating that the participants' responses to the statements were fairly reliable. For the present sample in this study, the alpha coefficient for the collaboration construct in July was in the good range at 0.82 and in the unacceptable range at 0.68 in December.

The second construct of the Inclusion Survey examined attitudes related to including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. I modeled the questions after the Indicators for Successful Inclusion Scale (ISIS) crafted by Brandes et al. (2015). In my survey, there are seven statements which examined the participants' beliefs about whether or not students with disabilities learn academic, social, behavioral, and independence skills in the general education classroom. The belief

statements are measured with the four-point Likert scale to which participants rate their level of agreement from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree.* Examples include, "I believe students with cognitive disabilities learn social skills in the general education classroom" or "I believe students with cognitive disabilities learn age appropriate behavior in the general education classroom." There was one open-ended question in which the participants were able to add any additional thoughts related to beliefs. The purpose of exploring the construct of beliefs is related to the idea that a person's beliefs are a variable that can predict his or her behavior according to the Theory of Planned Behavior. During the pilot administration of the survey, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the construct of beliefs was 0.82 indicating that the participants' responses to the statements were fairly reliable. For the present sample in this study, the alpha coefficient for the belief construct in July was in the good range at 0.85 and in the unacceptable range at 0.45 in December.

The final construct of the Inclusion Survey focused on efficacy to implement inclusive practices. To create this construct, I modified survey questions from the Teacher Perceived Efficacy for Inclusion Scale (TPEI) created by Lee (2013) to address the needs of students with cognitive disabilities. The 10 Likert scale statements delved into the participants' efficacy for academic, social, and behavioral inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities. Because each professional's responsibilities in inclusive settings vary slightly, the statements could not be the same for each role group. The survey questions, though measuring the same ideas of efficacy for academic, social, and behavioral inclusion, were written slightly differently for each role group. For example one question posed to general education teachers was, "I am able to incorporate goals

from the IEPs of students with cognitive disabilities into my classroom teaching." I worded the statement differently for special education teachers and IAs due to the support nature of their roles. Their statement read, "I am able to explain how to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities to a general education teacher." This section of the survey contained one open-ended question in which the participant was asked to delineate accommodations needed for a student with cognitive disabilities to participate in the general education classroom. This construct is designed to gather data to answer the second research question related to efficacy in implementing inclusive practices. During the pilot administration of the survey, I calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each role group. For general education teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was in the excellent reliability range ($\alpha = 0.93$). For the present study sample, Cronbach's alpha in July was in the unacceptable range ($\alpha = 0.49$) and in the excellent reliability range ($\alpha = 0.95$) in December. During the pilot administration, the special education teachers' responses yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient in the good range ($\alpha = 0.88$), whereas the instructional assistants' responses were within the acceptable range ($\alpha = .72$). With the present study sample, general education teachers' responses yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient within the unacceptable range in July ($\alpha = .49$) and within the excellent range in December ($\alpha = .96$). The alpha coefficient for IAs' responses was in the excellent range in July ($\alpha = .95$) and in the good range in December ($\alpha = .88$).

The survey was conducted twice during the intervention. The first administration occurred prior to the start of the professional development opportunity in July 2015. It served as a measure prior to any intervention. The second administration of the survey

occurred in December 2015, after the participants have been engaged in five months of monthly meetings. This served as a post intervention measure to document any changes that may have occurred in collaboration, beliefs, or efficacy for inclusive practices. The survey was administered electronically via Google Forms. Though the survey was meant to be anonymous, with the small number of participants for each role group, anonymity could not be guaranteed.

Monthly meetings. The monthly meetings, in which the team developed supports for the students with disabilities, were digitally recorded. Each meeting followed a similar structure with the general education teachers beginning by sharing academic expectations for students in the classroom. The team then analyzed the two students' strengths and needs and determined how the children would participate in inclusive classrooms. As a team, educational, peer, and/or technological supports required for the students were determined and the team agreed upon the person responsible for implementing that support. All agreements were documented on the Unified Plan of Support (UPS) developed and used in several research studies (Hunt et al., 2001, 2003; Mortier et al., 2009). Subsequent meetings began by reviewing the supports documented during the previous meeting. The team decided if the support was fully, moderately, somewhat, or not at all implemented. The documents created as part of the team meeting became artifacts used for analysis as well. Using the UPS, I was able to track changes and corroborate evidence, two important purposes for using documents in research (Bowen, 1997). Attendance at the monthly meetings is documented in Table 3.

Table 3

Attendance at Monthly Meetings

Month	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Mrs. Y. (Kindergarten teacher)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Mrs. F. (Kindergarten teacher)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Ms. A. (Special education teacher)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Ms. T. (Special education teacher)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	4
Ms. M (IA)	Y	Y	N	Y	N	3
Ms. S (IA)	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	4
Ms. C (IA)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	4
Ms. P (IA)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Mrs. W (Principal)	N	N	N	N	N	0

Interviews. I interviewed all adult participants in November of 2015 to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the innovation. I conducted semi-structured interviews, about an hour in length, with individual teachers and IAs. The semi-structured interview guide had a series of eight open-ended questions aimed at exploring teachers' and IAs' beliefs and teaching practices for students with disabilities. As Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010) suggest, the interview questions reflected the conceptual framework of teacher self-efficacy. The questions also probed the adult's perceptions of the children's academic, social, and behavioral progress. According to Wilson (2012), a semi-structured guide prompts the interviewees on specific topics, but allows space to for them to tell their own story about their experiences (Hennink et al., 2010). Because all interviewees answered the same set of questions, comparability of data was possible. Allowing the

participants to share their thoughts, concerns, beliefs, and experiences about the innovation was vital in providing triangulation of data. See the interview questions in Appendix F.

Because this is an innovative approach to collaboration implemented at this school, I sought the principal's input about the sustainability of this innovation. To garner the principal's perspective, I conducted an hour-long semi-structured interview. During the interview I explored her perception of the effects of the collaboration time on her staff's efficacy and the students' performance. Because this innovation involved a commitment of time and resources, I also inquired about the feasibility of continuing the collaborative meeting times and solicited her thoughts on elements necessary in order to sustain the dedicated collaboration time. The principal's outlook on the innovation was compared against the data from the teachers and IAs to answer the research questions. It was also used to gather feedback for future research in collaborative teaming.

Researcher's field notes. While conducting the research, I wrote memos, thoughts, and reflections. After the professional development class, I reflected on the extent to which I achieved the goals based on evidence from the class. I recorded an overall impression of how the class went as well as specifics of the types of questions asked. By recording the questions and conversations, I was able to tailor conversations in the monthly meetings and adjust interview questions. After each monthly meeting, I recorded my own observations about what occurred and reflected on my interpretations of those events. Likewise, after each interview, I recorded my impressions or questions that I needed to consider. The field notes were an avenue for me to reflect about ongoing analysis, new themes, or questions about the evidence.

Data Analysis

Inclusion survey. I downloaded the responses to the Likert scale questions from the website into an Excel spreadsheet. Each of the Likert scale response options was assigned a single digit. Answers of *Strongly Disagree* were coded with "1", *Disagree* were coded with "2", *Agree* received a "3", and answers of *Strongly Agree* were coded with a "4." The data captured from the Likert scale items on the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics. I computed the mean, median, minimum, and maximum score for each statement and within each construct. To determine if any changes occurred as a result of the innovation, I compared the mean scores from each of the constructs from the pre-survey to the post-survey.

I analyzed the open-ended questions qualitatively. Each statement was broken into meaningful chunks of around six to eight words and coded using verbatim, or in vivo, codes. According to Saldana (2013), in vivo codes use the participants' own language as codes. These codes were then categorized or grouped together by similarities. Finally, I looked for themes within the categories. After the completion of the interviews, these statements were then compared to the data collected in the interviews and monthly meetings to develop the assertions. The data from the first survey was used to enhance and focus the interview questions as well.

Monthly meetings. Each monthly meeting was digitally recorded, transcribed, and saved in a secure location. The transcripts from the meetings were analyzed using thematic analysis immediately following each meeting. Thematic analysis is a method of finding "repeated patterns of meaning" (Flick, 2009, p. 421). The first round of coding was performed with the assistance of NVivo software. I read each transcript and divided

the content into meaningful chunks of data, approximately eight to twelve words. Each meaningful chunk of data received a code. The first round coding consisted of open coding using in vivo, or verbatim (Saldana, 2013), codes to capture the participant's experiences. In vivo codes use words or short phrases from the participant's language to honor their voice. Using the open codes from the first round, I categorized the codes using focused coding in which I looked for how the codes were conceptually similar (Saldana, 2013). Finally, from these categories, I developed themes to represent the data. The resulting themes were brought back to the team for their review. Through the analysis of the monthly meeting transcripts, I specifically looked for the supports the team employed and their expectations for the students' academic, behavior, and social inclusion.

An artifact resultant from the monthly meeting was the Unified Plan of Support (UPS). The UPS captured the agreed-upon academic and social supports that the team implemented. A copy of this document was collected each month, and analyzed. I cataloged and quantified the forms of support the team used, as well as the person responsible for implementing the supports. At each meeting, the team also documented their rating for the level of implementation on a four point scale, with the anchors of *fully implemented* to *not all implemented.* I recorded the types of supports and the level of implementation. The UPS provided a history of the types of supports employed through the course of the study. Through all of this, I looked for an emergence of patterns.

Interviews. Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into NVivo software. I read the transcription to start the process of thematic analysis as described in the Monthly Meeting section. Similarly to the process described above, the

first round coding consisted of open coding using in vivo, or verbatim (Saldana, 2013), codes to capture the participants' experiences. Using the open codes from the first round, I categorized the codes and developed themes from the categories. I specifically looked for statements about teacher efficacy or beliefs and how those were used to construct the current inclusive environment for the students with cognitive disabilities. The nine interviews were analyzed separately, but compared based on role group delineation. For example, I examined the themes which I found in the two general education teachers' interviews with the themes from the two special education teachers and the four IAs to see how they converged or diverged. The interviews were coded separately from the monthly meetings, however, the resulting themes were compared for triangulation purposes.

As both a participant and a researcher for this project, the coding and thematic analysis had the potential to be "an incomplete, self-centered picture of reality [which will] limit opportunities for connections to be made and innovations to be explored" (Foulger, 2009). In order to push myself to both consider multiple perspectives and to justify my coding decisions, I employed a critical friend two specific times during the coding process. I selected another doctoral candidate with knowledge of action research and education as my critical friend. The purpose of this person was to ask thought-provoking questions, examine my data through another lens, and offer critiques of my work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). We met after I completed the coding for the team meetings and the interviews. During this time, I showed the critical friend the verbatim codes and explained how they were categorized. The friend reviewed them, asked clarifying questions, and paraphrased to guide my thinking. At the second meeting with

the critical friend, I shared the theme statements that I generated and asked the friend to review. By including this step in the analysis process, I was able to conduct an external conversation (Foulger, 2009) as a means to present a more complete and accurate picture of the data.

Researcher's field notes. I noted my reflections, questions, and general impressions after each data collection opportunity during the course of the study. Using the notation method outlined by Groenewald (2004), I delineated the notes as either observational, theoretical, methodological, or analytical. Observational notes documented my observations from interviews or monthly meetings. These observation notes served as a means of triangulation when comparing interview or meeting transcripts. Theoretical notes, on the other hand, represented my attempts to connect my observations or initial analysis to one of the theoretical frameworks. There were also times when I had questions for which I wanted to find how other practitioners or researchers had attempted to solve the problem in their setting. Methodological notes were my notes on the research process. Through the use of these types of memos, I ensured that I adhered to sound methodological practice by documenting the decisions I made throughout the data collection. These notes provided consistency in data collection as I referred to them frequently. The final notation type I used were analytical notes. Analytical notes represented my notes on the decisions I made when analyzing the data. These notes were a log of the process and decisions I made during analysis. This was a place to reflect on an ongoing basis about new themes or questions about evidence. Because the transcripts from monthly meetings were coded and analyzed monthly, the analytic notes maintained

consistency. All of these field notes were used to both document the process and to assist me in making meaning of the data.

Results

The preceding section delineated both the data collection tools and the process for analysis of this mixed method action research study. In this section, the results of this study are summarized by examining the results from the data collection tools used to answer the research questions. The quantitative data are reported first followed by the qualitative data. The research questions for this action research project were:

- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general, and special education teachers?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectation for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress?

Results for Quantitative Data

The sole quantitative data collection instrument was the Inclusion Survey. It was completed by all eight participants in July, prior to participation in any innovation and again in December 2015, at the conclusion of the study. The instrument measured three constructs: collaboration, beliefs, and efficacy. The Likert scale for these questions ranged from *Strongly Disagree* = 1 to *Strongly Agree* = 4. Once participants completed

the survey, I downloaded the results from Google Drive into a spreadsheet and coded the Likert scale responses. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, I calculated descriptive statistics. I compared the mean level of agreement of the construct of collaboration to the constructs of beliefs and efficacy. Table 4 displays the mean level of agreement and the standard deviation for all questions within each of the three constructs. A table containing the minimum, maximum, mean, and median for each survey question can be found in Appendix G.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Each Overall Construct

	July 2015		December 2015	
Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collaboration (n = 8)	3.34	0.43	2.94	0.42
Belief (n = 8)	3.39	0.37	3.43	0.25
Efficacy				
• Instructional Assistant (n = 4)	3.35	0.48	3.18	0.50
• Special Education Teacher (n = 2)	3.45	0.21	3.15	0.21
• General Education Teacher (n = 2)	3.55	0.21	3.40	0.71

Collaboration was the first construct measured in this survey. The question stems were developed to determine the participants' perceptions about the content and importance of collaboration, as well as the collaborative environment in which they work. In July, the mean level of agreement was in the agree range with a mean of 3.34. The mean decreased to 2.94 at the second survey administration. The standard deviation remained fairly constant at 0.43 and 0.42, respectively demonstrating little variation in

responses. I conducted a paired sample *t*-test to compare the differences in means from pre to post survey. The difference in mean was not significant with $t(7) = 1.902$, $p = 0.98$. Because the number of participants is small (n = 8), the *t*-test results should be interpreted with caution.

During the final survey, there were two additional questions designed to determine the effect of the monthly meetings of the collaboration level of the team. Table 5 displays the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for both of the survey questions. All eight participants answered the questions. The mean level of agreement for the first question was 3.38, indicating that the team agreed that structured collaboration time changed the level of collaboration within the team. Additionally, the team agreed that they learned new strategies as a result of collaboration as evidenced by a mean level of agreement of 3.38 for this question.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Evaluative Collaboration Questions from Post Survey

Survey Statement n =8	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*
Participating in this experience changed the level of collaboration among my team (general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs).	2.00	4.00	3.38	0.74
I learned strategies to include students with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	4.00	3.38	0.52

The second construct of the survey targeted the participants' beliefs about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. Refer to

Table 4 for the construct results. Each question focused on the beliefs about specific areas of development for children with cognitive disabilities: social, academics, behavior, and independence. There were also two questions addressing the respondents' perception of their teammates' beliefs and the belief that collaboration is necessary. This construct was the only one to show a descriptive increase in mean level of agreement between July and December with means of 3.39 and 3.43, respectively. The standard deviation also decreased between the two surveys as well, demonstrating a decrease in variation among participants. Using a paired sample *t*-test, the difference in means was not statistically significant with $t(7) = -0.23$, $p = 0.82$. Because the number of participants was small (n = 8), the *t*-test results should be interpreted with caution.

During the final survey, there were two questions designed to determine the effect of the monthly meetings on the beliefs. Table 6 displays the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each of the survey questions from the post survey administered in December 2015. All eight participants answered the questions. The mean level of agreement for the first question was 2.50, indicating that the team disagreed that structured collaboration time changed their beliefs about including students with cognitive disabilities. The team, however, agreed that they learned different ways of thinking as evidenced by a mean level of agreement of 3.38 for this question.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Evaluative Belief Questions from Post Survey

Survey Statement n =8	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*
Participating in this experience changed my beliefs about educating students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	2.00	3.00	2.50	0.53
I learned different ways of thinking about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	4.00	3.38	0.52

The final construct measured the level of efficacy among the three role groups. Refer to Table 4 for the construct results. The survey questions, though measuring the same ideas, were written slightly differently for each role group. For example, one question posed to the general education teacher was, "I am able to incorporate goals from the IEPs of students with cognitive disabilities into my classroom teaching." I worded the statement differently for the special education teacher and IA due to the support nature of their roles. Their statement read, "I am able to explain to a general education teacher how to incorporate goals from IEPs in the classroom." The mean level of agreement decreased between the pre and post survey administration for each role group. The general education teachers had the highest level of efficacy in both survey administrations with mean level of agreements of 3.55 and 3.40, respectively. IAs had the lowest level of efficacy with a mean score of 3.35 in July and 3.18 in December. The two special educators' mean level of efficacy declined by 0.30 between the two surveys

administrations. In July, their mean level of agreement was 3.45, which decreased to 3.15 in December. All mean levels of agreement for the three role groups, however, were in the agreement range with scores of three or higher. In the July administration of the survey, there was low variability of answers as evidenced by standard deviations ranging from 0.21 to 0.48. In the December survey, the levels of agreement for all role groups had more variability with standard deviations of 0.21 for the special education teachers, 0.50 for the IAs, 0.71 for general education teachers. Because the number of participants for each role group was less than 5, I was unable to conduct a paired samples *t*-test.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Evaluative Efficacy Questions from Post Survey

Survey Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*
	General Education Teachers (n = 2)			
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00
I learned new strategies to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00
	Special Education Teachers (n = 2)			
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00
I learned new strategies to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00
	Instructional Assistants (n = 4)			
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	2.00	3.00	2.50	0.58
I learned new strategies to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00

Each role group's December survey contained two questions designed to determine the effect of the monthly meetings on efficacy. Table 7 displays the minimum,

maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each of the evaluative survey questions found on the post survey. Special education teachers reported the highest level of increase of efficacy as noted by both teachers strongly agreeing to the statement that participating in this experience changed their abilities to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. Their mean level of agreement was 4.00. The two general education teachers agreed that this experience changed their abilities with a mean level of agreement of 3.00. IAs did not feel as strongly that their abilities changed. The mean level of agreement for them was 2.50, in the disagreement range. All participants felt that they learned new strategies to teach or support students with disabilities in the general education classroom as evidenced by mean level of agreements of 3.00 for general education teachers and IAs, and 4.00 for special education teachers.

Results for Qualitative Data

The qualitative results consisted of data collected from the monthly meetings, the UPS documents crafted at each meeting, interviews, open ended survey questions, and researcher field notes. I analyzed each of the data collection tools separately then compared data to determine themes. Themes were derived from the coding process of using verbatim codes, categorizing those codes, and searching for patterns. Based on this process, I identified the seven themes of: (a) expertise, (b) connectivity, (c) researcher's role, (d) efficacy, (e) belief, (f) student expectations, and (g) sustainability. These themes led to seven assertions. In the following section, I will present each research question, the corresponding themes, and assertions. Following each table, I explain and supply quotes to support each of the assertions. I selected quotes to represent all role groups and data collection methods.

RQ 1 assertions. The first research question asked how, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general, and special education teachers? To answer this question, I relied on data generated from monthly meetings, open-ended survey questions, and interviews. The themes of expertise, connectivity, and researcher's role contribute to answering RQ1. Table 8 displays the themes, theme-related components, and assertions connected to this research question followed by exemplary quotes from each role group to support and explain the assertion.

Table 8

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for RQ1 From Analysis of Qualitative Data

RQ1: How and to what extent does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general, and special education teachers?

Themes	Theme-Related Components	Assertions
Expertise	• General education teachers explained classroom routines and delineated expectations. • Special education teachers documented decisions, offered supports, and managed the implementation. • IA contributed previous experiences with the specific child and expertise in working with students with special needs. • All team members identified problem areas and engaged in problem solving. • All team members expressed their individual perspective of the children.	Each team member engaged in the team meetings with common contributions as well as specific areas of expertise.
Connectivity	• Both quality and quantity of communication increased across role groups. • The monthly meetings allowed for general educators and special educators to learn about and coordinate academic expectations in each environment. • The monthly meetings provided a forum for the creation of a plan, and subsequent feedback. • The IAs were seen as a more integral part of the team and felt valued.	The team felt connected to each other, and their goals of providing consistent service for students with cognitive disabilities.
Researcher's Role	• The researcher brokered the conversations between existing roles (i.e. special education, general education, IA) • The researcher facilitated the monthly meetings by keeping the meeting outcome oriented, asking clarifying questions, and seeking agreement. • The researcher shared expertise in strategies to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education setting. • The team members valued having a facilitator for the meetings.	The team members found benefit in having a facilitator to both lead the discussion and provide additional expertise.

Expertise. Assertion 1- *Each team member engaged in the team meetings with common contributions as well as specific areas of expertise*. This assertion was derived primarily from the team meetings. I analyzed each team meeting to determine the types of conversations that occurred. Because the team meetings utilized the routines based planning form (Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012), one function of the meetings was for general education teachers to share the routines of the classroom. During the course of the four team meetings, Mrs. Y. explained routines for her center rotations time and for computer lab time. Mrs. F. explained the different center rotations routine in her classroom, as well as the morning unpacking and afternoon packing up routines. General education teachers also delineated expectations for the students and staff working with those students. Mrs. Y. expressed the desire to have the IA "not sit next to her necessarily all the time," but to "sit behind and watch is she following the directions and support that way." (September 30, 2015).

The role of the special education teacher was different. Special education teachers took over the responsibility of documenting the decisions on the UPS forms and managed the implementation of the supports. At the September 9, 2015 team meeting, Ms. A stated, "I'll be communicating more with Mrs. S. [the IA] to make sure she is not doing things for her [the child], but prompting her to do them" (September 9, 2015). Ms. A also held the vision of the goals for the child. She averred, "We'll see if we can fade to a checklist with verbal prompts and then fade the verbal prompts. Then hopefully fade that to everything being independent" (September 9, 2015). Ms. T. made the connection for the team how Kerri was going to be doing something different, but practicing the same

skill. She said, “So she is still sequencing so she can still hear Mrs. F say, ‘We're sequencing these.’ It is just how she does it is different” (August 12, 2015).

During the team meetings, the IA contributed their previous experiences with the focus children as a means of helping the team to solve current problems. Mrs. P. discussed her experiences with Kerri. She explained,

> If you give her a second sometimes she will figure it out. She gets in the hallway and then she'll look down and see what she has all of a sudden and then she'll come back and put it away where it is supposed to go. (September 30, 2015)

In a team meeting where we were discussing the importance of using visual prompts, Mrs. C. shared an insight she learned from reading a book about students with Down syndrome. She explained, “It was saying for reminders, because they were talking about short term memory and long term memory, and it is the visual getting burned into the brain kind of thing that helps with the repetition of knowing what to do” (September 30, 2015). The IAs appreciated having an opportunity to share their personal experiences and expertise. In the open-ended survey question, one IA noted, “We’ve been able to share expertise and experiences that we have with this student(s)” (December 12, 2015).

The monthly meetings provided a venue for team members to identify problem areas and brainstorm solutions, while sharing their individual perspectives about the students. During the initial team meeting on August 12, 2015, Mrs. Y. expressed a problem she was experiencing with Ann’s schedule. She stated, “The negative part right now is that she is missing all of the modeling and instruction, so when she comes in she is confused.” The special education teachers were unaware this was occurring and of the impact it was having on Ann. As a result of this discussion, the special education teachers

were able to adjust Ann's schedule so that she was not being pulled out for resource instruction during the classroom instruction.

While engaging in problem solving, the team had the opportunity to share individual perspectives based on personal knowledge of the children, which led to a deeper team understanding. To illustrate, when discussing Kerri's ability to answer a question asked by Mrs. F. during the morning routine, Ms. A. learned that she had a different understanding of Kerri's abilities. The following exchange highlights the perspective sharing:

> Researcher: Maybe it is not a yes or no question. Maybe the yes and no response is confusing to her.
>
> Ms. A.: But she understands yes and no.
>
> Mrs. F.: Not at that point.
>
> Ms. A.: Do you need a break? Yes. Do you need to go potty? No.
>
> Mrs. P.: Yes, but you can also her the same question later and she changes the answer. (September 30, 2015)

During Mrs. P.'s interview, she reaffirmed the importance of hearing other's perspectives. She mentioned that after the resource teacher "started tracking it, she was like, 'She can answer one question that I always ask her, consistently, knowing what she's asking.' The rest of the questions were not consistent. She was just responding" (November 11, 2015). As a result of having this discussion and hearing others' perceptions of Kerri's abilities, the team "started focusing on … answering yes or no questions, which helped with the incorporation of the visual tool" (Mrs. P., November 11, 2015).

Other statements about hearing other perspectives included knowing what the students were doing in all environments. Ms. A. explained that previous discussions about students were "never a focused conversation and I think that's been the most valuable, is to hear everybody at the same time so that we get those different perspectives" (November 13, 2015). She also noted, "To hear, both from an IA and from the teacher, the perspective of how the student is doing in the classroom is completely open to me because I'm not in there" (November 13, 2015). Ms. T. also discussed the importance of perspective. In her words,

> I think there's a lot of advantages, because we're able to communicate different things we see, and maybe it's something that maybe I see in my math group, that I wouldn't have found maybe either as significant, or insignificant, based on my little bubble of seeing the girls, but when talked about, when it's brought up, just to hear that, "She does that here. We need to work on that here," and then to have it, it brings a broader picture to whatever that piece may be. (November 18, 2015)

The preceding quotes feature the common contributions from team members during the team meetings, as well as specific areas of expertise.

Connectivity. Assertion 3 – *The team felt connected to each other, and their goals of providing consistent service for students with cognitive disabilities.* One of the outcomes of the monthly team meetings was a sense of connectedness for the team. The theme of connectivity was found in all qualitative data: the team meetings, interviews, and open ended survey responses. One specific area of connectedness was in communication. One IA response on the open ended survey was,

> I feel our support of each other and communication is much better now than it was in the beginning of the year due to all of us having these meetings where the general ed teachers, resource teachers, IA's, and district support were meeting all together to collaborate on what is going on and what needs to be achieved. (December 2, 2015)

Ms. A. stated the importance of having all team members "in the same place talking about it at the same time" (November 13, 2015). As she discussed the change in communication with the team, she explained the previous existing situation as a means of highlighting what has changed. She described,

> We, in the past, I'll meet with the teacher and I'll talk to the teacher about certain things. Then, I try to pass along the information to the IA who is working with the student at the same time or the other way around. It just never seems to be exactly the same conversation and everyone seems to have a different perspective on what was said. We're not always all talking actually about the same thing. (November 13, 2015)

By having all team members together, "the telephone kind of method of communication" (Mrs. P., November 11, 2015) was eliminated.

One specific benefit to increased communication is the opportunity for focused conversations between the general education teacher and the instructional assistant. Mrs. Y. noted that "It's been positive so that it's been a time when she's [the IA] not having to hurry off, because their schedules are tight" (November 13, 2015). Ms. M. noted that the meetings "helped us [she and the general education teacher] have more of a dialog as how we want to go through the process" (November 18, 2015). Mrs. F. stated that having the monthly conversations has "given us some different ways to look at things, and it's given me kind of a way to more to talk with Mrs. S.[the IA] about different things we could try, instead of Mrs. S. just doing it" (November 10, 2015). Mrs. Y. observed that the longer conversations in the team meeting allowed for shorter, more meaningful conversation with the IA in the classroom. She acknowledged "Now that she knows the kind of things that I'm looking for that even that 30-second conversation is helpful" (November 13, 2015). She also noted that because of the monthly conversation,

the IA has a more clear understanding of what the teacher wanted Ann to do (November 13, 2015).

A second area of connectivity was the communication and coordination of academic work between the special education and general education teachers. One resource teacher noted the concern with the previous level of communication between special and general education by saying, “I hardly ever hear from teachers, hardly ever. Unless they need somebody to go on a field trip” (Ms. A., November 13, 2015). She acknowledged that previously she didn’t “really know what she's [the student’s] doing in the classroom with them” (Mrs. A., November 13, 2015). Mrs. F. echoed the disconnection between resource and general education by saying, “I don’t know what sort of curriculum they’re working on [in resource]. I suppose there’s something” (November 10, 2015). She also said, “It would be nice to know what kind of skills she’s working on in resource” (November 10, 2015).

The monthly meetings allowed an avenue for the general education teachers to learn about and coordinate academic expectations for the benefit of the students. Mrs. Y. expressed this sentiment best when she said, “When we're at these meetings, I hear pieces of what they're working on from the IEP. That is something that I don't hear other times” (November 13, 2015). At two of the team meetings, Mrs. Y. and Ms. T. engaged in a lengthy conversation about the methods both were using to instruct letters and numbers. At one meeting, Ms. T. agreed to “work on those numbers because that is an important number to her life, that student ID” (September 9, 2015) during resource math instruction. Additionally, they agreed to have Ms. T. reinforce the letters taught in the classroom along with following the sequence from the intervention curriculum she was

using. After implementing that, Mrs. Y. said, “So Ann is just focused on what we are working on, the same thing in the classroom. So, you know, she is starting to get things” (September 30, 2015). In the interview Mrs. Y. reinforced the importance of the special education and general education teacher coordinating services. She stated,

> These are what we're going to be doing so that they could use the same letters and try to give them a sense of what we're doing in math so that, even though that they're not on Ann’s IEP, but they know what we're doing as a class. Patterning is not on her IEP, but we're doing that in class. Maybe using pattern to help her reach some of her IEP goals or reinforcing it, those little pieces. That time, when it's to talk about, even briefly touch on some of the things that we're each doing has been positive. (November 13, 2015)

Mrs. Y. commented on the value of the team meeting by saying, “I feel like there’s a setup for communication with the resource team that I don’t have to invent. There’s already a set up” (November 13, 2015).

Ms. A. identified the coordination of events from resource and general education as important. She declared,

> The other benefit is knowing what the Gen Ed teacher is doing in the classroom, so that you can either support it in here or replicate it or work on the same skill in a different way or if you're not getting the results, then try that strategy that the teacher used. (November 13, 2015)

Ms. A. and Mrs. F. coordinated efforts and strategies to be used across environments for Kerri to be successful. After implementing a color schedule for Kerri to be used during job rotations in the general education classroom, Ms. A implemented the same system in resource (August 12, 2015). Ms. A attested to the importance of these conversations by saying,

> And in this situation this year, I'm not in the classroom. Last year, I was in the classroom for all of my support, so I already had a view of what was going on in the classroom. But this year, all of my support is pull-out and I'm not in the classroom at all. I don't have that, in person, see how she is doing in the classroom. (November 13, 2015)

Mrs. W., the principal, expressed that by participating in this experience, “You have opened our eyes to the fact that there is much more needed ongoing communication that should now really just be an expectation” (November 10, 2015).

The development and follow through of a plan was a benefit of the monthly meetings. Ms. T. commented on the positive effects of being able to create a plan. She asserted,

> The fact that the whole team is able to sit down and talk, specifically about the one student, and where we want to see growth, and what we want to see grow, and how we're going to do that, and who's going to, “You're taking ownership of that, that piece you're taking ownership. Okay” Then go do it. Then coming back and saying, “Okay. How did that go?” “Okay. Fix that, tweak that, do that, add that. Okay.” Now come back. “How did that go?”. (November 18, 2015)

Her sentiments were supported by the other resource teacher who stated, “It was my chance to hear, well did that support I created or provided or suggestion, did it work? This was the only place where I had an opportunity to hear back on it” (November 13, 2015). Mrs. Y. “liked that we were setting goals together” for the student (November 13, 2015). Ms. P. further explained,

> I feel like it's valuable to have these meetings to see how things are working. Especially getting things done on a timeline, because when you meet, you go back and go, “This did not get done, and it needs to be done. How can we check if it's working if we haven't gotten it done?” I do think it provides a more clear plan with clear goals that you're trying to achieve before you move on. That I think is really good. (November 11, 2015)

Ms. S. spoke about how all team members were willing to implement something, even if they did not think it would work because “We were writing something down and we were coming back for accountability" (November 20, 2015). On the survey, one IA wrote “They provided a set of written goals that helped me know what we all are working towards, along with a set of tools” (December 2, 2015). Mrs. C.’s analogy explains it

perfectly, “It’s like everybody going on a diet together as a group. You had to go and weigh in. You’re being accountable” (November 20, 2015). Mrs. W. called the creation of a plan, “shares the ownership, it shares the responsibility, it shares the communication, and it shares the commitment” (November 10, 2015). She later pronounced, “That’s what we need to be doing to make everybody a part of a meaningful effort to improve achievement for a specific kid” (November 10, 2015).

The final component of connectivity was the elevation of the status of the IAs. Mrs. Y. commented that “Just that piece of including them [the IAs] has increased their value of themselves as part of the team.” She felt that, “The things we’ve talked about, the IA, I feel like they’re more empowered” (November 13, 2015). She also noted that, “The IAs speak differently about the students because they feel like they’re on the team versus that they’re just an accessory to the team” (November 13, 2015). She further stated that the conversations between the IA and her “have a different level to them. The IA offers more suggestions” (November 13, 2015).

The IAs expressed the same notion of feeling valued because they were included in this process. Mrs. P. stated, “It was nice to be a part of helping with this whole thing. I felt part of the team” (November 11, 2015). Ms. C. explained, “I think all of that is huge because we would never be able to have this kind of an input and be a part of that team” (November 20, 2015). Mrs. S. defined how she felt valued by saying, “A couple of times now, she’s actually said, ‘Thank you. Thank you for your help.’ We don’t normally hear those words. That’s all we need because sometimes, to feel part of the team” (November 20, 2015).

Overall, the connectivity of the team supporting these two students has increased. Mrs. Y. states, “It feels more team like than it ever has, and that’s a good thing” (November 13, 2015). A general education teacher comment from the survey reflects that “It has given me additional insight into the working of the resource team” (December 2, 2015). Mrs. Y. summarized it best when she noted that this opportunity has created a “more comfortable relationship with the sped area. The resource team, the teachers, the staff, the aides. It doesn’t feel like I’m the annoying little gnat that is coming with questions” (November 13, 2015). Being more connected to each other has increased the feeling of being on a team.

Researcher’s role. Assertion 3 – *The team members found benefit in having a facilitator to both lead the discussion and provide additional expertise.* This assertion developed after the interviews in which each role group mentioned the importance of having a facilitator. Ms. P explained her perspective on a facilitator by saying,

> I think it was helpful to have somebody facilitating it. I don't think you could throw us all in the room and have that work. I think it was nice to have somebody who knew what they wanted to do, and the format of the way the meeting needed to run. I think a facilitator isn't a bad thing to have. Somebody guiding the meeting and keeping everybody on task. (November 11, 2015)

As Ms. A stated, “having someone to facilitate the discussion and also provide additional expertise made this a learning experience” (November 13, 2015). A respondent to the survey stated, “It has been a great benefit in having facilitated discussions and expertise in guiding some of our work/efforts. That support and resource available to us has increased my understanding of what is possible” (December 2, 2015). Ms. A. explained that a facilitator is “always helpful, especially when it’s something new. It’s always easier to have somebody helping, guiding” (November 13, 2015). Mrs. C. described the

role of the facilitator as, “like the mediator. You’re the adviser. You’re the motivator, the helper” (November 20, 2015).

After the interviews, I revisited the team meeting transcripts to analyze the roles I served as the facilitator of the monthly meetings. My primary role was brokering the conversation between the role groups. This occurred due to my role as a researcher and developing this plan and innovation. During the meetings, I facilitated the meetings by focusing on the protocol, paraphrasing, seeking agreement, and asking clarifying questions. I invited participants to share by asking, “What are your experiences Ms. M.?” (November 3, 2015) or I sought agreement by posing the question “Are we all in agreement with this action step?” (August 12, 2015).

An important role I played was sharing information and my expertise with including students with cognitive disabilities. Mrs. C. explained that I, as the expert and facilitator,

> ...came up with solutions and strategies that could and would help both girls, for instance, in the classroom. The fact that you coming up with it and saying, “Could that work? Would you be able to do that? Do you see this possibly being beneficial for the student?” I remember you asking all those questions. (November 20, 2015)

She explained that this facilitation was very valuable in getting the plan both created and implemented. Mrs. S. noted that my presence,

> almost prodded the regular ed [sic] teachers into trying something different that they would have been really reluctant to do be before, or basically they wouldn’t have done. You put it back in their court and then they’re willing to try. (November 20, 2015)

According to Mrs. C. and Mrs. S., my presence led to agreement and implementation of the plans.

An example of my sharing expertise comes from one of the first team meetings when I explained the importance of creating a schedule. I explained to the team that creating a schedule was an important thing for Kerri. “It is a pre-reading activity as she reads left to right and gets her into a routine. And when she reads it left to right she knows what she is going to do” (August 12, 2015). In this example, I was not only sharing a strategy which the team had not yet considered, but I was also educating the team about why that was an important skill for the student. During another team meeting, I explained the research on prompts by stating, “When we use verbal prompts, kids get over-reliant on them and then they don’t begin doing it on their own. We really should think about another way to prompt her” (September 30, 2015). Another example of sharing expertise came during a discussion where the classroom teacher was lamenting that Kerri was not able to complete the jobs. I explained,

> We want her to be able to do something independently. But asking her to write that sentence with that proper spacing, when she's not yet writing letters, we can never ask her to be independent. I don't want to say never. She's not at a place where we can ask her to be independent right now. We can’t ever get to independence if it’s a task that too hard for her, if that makes sense. If we change the activity, then the ultimate thing down the road is that if we can teach her the skill to do this. Then maybe down the road, because we've reduced the cognitive task, the cognitive demand, maybe it is that she can do it independently. (December 2, 2015)

Ms. T noted the importance of having somebody who was able to teach “the methodology behind it [the supports]. That needs to be communicated, and taught, and understood by everyone… or it’s not going to be successful” (November 18, 2015). The preceding quotes emphasize the roles I, as the facilitator, fulfilled during the team meetings.

The above section explains each of the assertions connected to the themes that will be used to answer research question one about the effect the innovation had on collaboration. The themes used in this section were expertise, connectivity, and researcher's role.

RQ 2 assertions. The second research question was, how, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs? To answer this research question, I relied on data generated from monthly meetings, open-ended survey questions, and interviews. The themes of efficacy and beliefs contribute to answering RQ2. Table 9 displays the themes, theme-related components, and assertions connected to this research question followed by exemplary quotes from each role group to support the assertion.

Table 9

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for RQ2 From Analysis of Qualitative Data

RQ2 How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs?

Theme	Theme-Related Components	Assertion
Efficacy	• Each role group learned new strategies to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. • IAs learned new strategies for working with students with cognitive disabilities that they were able to apply with other students. • General education teachers viewed themselves as effective in having the student feel a part of the class, but questioned their ability to assess their understanding. • Special education teachers expressed feelings of being consciously incompetent.	Though team members learned new strategies, they articulated both strengths and weaknesses in their abilities to include students with cognitive disabilities.
Belief	• IAs strengthened their focus on what a child can do and the small growth the child has made. • General education teachers accepted students with cognitive disabilities as individuals and figured out a way for them to be successful and an integral part of the classroom. • Special education teachers strongly believed that students with cognitive disabilities should be in the general education classroom. • Each role group believed that some members of other role groups (outside of the study) did not share the same belief or have the same efficacy.	The team members analyzed and reaffirmed their own positive beliefs about students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom, but they did not see others as having the same positive belief or efficacy.

Efficacy. Assertion 4 - *Participating in the monthly meetings and training had both positive and negative effects on efficacy.* One important component of efficacy is the attainment of new strategies. All of the participants reported that they learned new techniques to enable them to perform their jobs better. One general education teacher wrote on the open-ended survey, "I learned some inclusion strategies in the large group setting such as just asking her a simple question so that she feels included" (December 2, 2015). An IA also noted, "It allowed me to learn a new strategy called routine based learning" (December 2, 2015). Ms. M., also an IA, expressed that the meetings were,

> …helpful because I would never have thought to do this kind of stuff before. Even though, I've heard it mentioned I just wouldn't know how to implement it. I feel like now, seeing and hearing it, being told how to do it, I feel like in the future if I had to suggest it to a teacher then I feel comfortable that I could tell them, "Maybe this will work better for me as well as the student." (November 18, 2015)

Ms. A explained how participating in the monthly meetings helped her learn the skill of "breaking everything down, really looking at a task and analyzing where we are hitting problem areas and then what are we going to do about solving that problem" (November 13, 2015). Ms. T. detailed how now that she had seen the positive outcomes of collaboration, "I thought to myself, 'Where else can I do this?' And now I'm collaborating and reinforcing with the K5 aide from one of my groups. And we're seeing growth" (November 18, 2015). Each of the individual quotes highlights the idea that all role groups acquired new skills.

The IAs all discussed new learnings, but they specifically noted how the strategies learned were versatile and could be applied with other students. Mrs. P. discussed how she learned "using more visuals and using hand signals more. I incorporated that with another student that I work with, just saying so much less, giving much less in the way of

verbal directions" (November 11, 2015). Mrs. C. articulated, "I learned the importance of the difference between modification and accommodation and how and when to do what and why. It was the importance of that and keeping them in the classroom and not separating them and stuff like that" (November 20, 2015). Mrs. S. echoed Mrs. C.'s statement and said, "I am more conscious of whether I am modify or accommodating when I work with any student" (November 20, 2015). Ms. M. also mentioned the difference between modifying and accommodating. She stated,

> …that was something last year that I was a little bit iffy on, like where should I modify it and where…Or for the teacher, where should they modify it and where should… I feel like that kind of helped me understand it a little bit for like, if the student where they needed it to be modified or accommodated. I feel like maybe knowing the wording of it and maybe seeing your definitions for it, because you had that grid. That kind of helped a little bit, as far as understanding. (November 18, 2015)

Mrs. P.'s response most effectively summarize the comments made by all IAs. She remarked, "I would say that I'm a better IA from having those trainings. I think it helps to hear them, but I think it's really helpful to hear them again, and again, and again. Because you forget" (November 11, 2015). She later added,

> I don't necessarily know if it's learn[ing] new strategies, because I think a lot of the strategies are the same type of thing. What you learn is how to apply it to a different situation. I think maybe a situation's come up, you're like, "Oh yeah, I can do that. Think about the strategy. I forgot about that." (November 11, 2015)

The above quotes reiterate the idea that all the IAs learned new strategies they were able to apply when working with other students.

The general education teachers viewed themselves as effective in having the students feel a part of their classes. They, however, questioned their ability to assess students' understanding. Mrs. Y. voiced, "I'm good at bringing out, finding your little shining light and making it, and trying and then getting it to light some more embers.

Let's go. We're going to have a bonfire. I'm pretty good at that" (November 13, 2015). She also mentioned, "I'm good at making everyone feel successful and yet showing them that 'you've got places to go.' I'm effective in having Ann feel part of the class team, the learning team" (November 13, 2015). Mrs. F. also conveyed confidence in her ability by saying, "With any of them, that's what you do. You take them where they're at, and you move them on" (November 10, 2015). She later asserted,

> Come on in, whoever you are, whatever you have, we'll try and work around it. What else can you do? Whatever you have, you try and see what they can do. And try and help them learn more. Yeah, they've got their needs, just like everybody else does. They're all special in some way. (November 13, 2015)

Both teachers also conveyed growth areas for themselves in working with students with cognitive disabilities. Mrs. F explained a frustration she experiences,

> I still don't know a way that I can check her understanding. She can't draw you a picture. She can't write you a sentence. I still would like to be able to know when she reads that, I need a way that she can communicate better with me, and I don't know what that is. (November 10, 2015)

Mrs. F. later elaborated on her inability to truly teach Kerri when she said, "I'm not even sure how to help her grow, especially since I don't do the work with her. I don't sit down and see her do it. I just see the finished product" (November 10, 2015). Mrs. Y. noted that she wants to try multiple plans to enable a student to be successful. She lamented,

> I wish I was better at multi-tasking. If this isn't working, let's try the next plan. I takes me a while to think about it and see what I could work out. I wish I was more fluid on that. It takes me a while to think about it. (November 13, 2015)

Both general education teachers asserted they were effective at teaching all students. Both teachers also stated areas of uncertainty they faced in teaching students with cognitive disabilities.

The special education teachers' expression of efficacy was very different from either the general education teachers' or IAs' views of themselves. The special education teachers spoke of all of the tasks they should be doing each day, but exclaimed that, "there is not enough time" (November 13, 2018; November 18, 2018) to do even a portion of them. Mrs. A. aired her concern in the following way,

> I fall short continually because I feel like there's probably 8 million other strategies like I never would have thought, write it on a postie note. There's so much out there online, in trainings, all these other classes. I don't have time to do my planning of my lessons. I don't have time to go doing all of that and finding those new strategies but that's what I feel like I should be doing. (November 13, 2015)

In specific reference to supporting students with cognitive disabilities, Mrs. A. further explicated, "I personally feel very ineffective due to the inability to dedicate more time to working directly with the general education teachers and IAs, as well as to look into/create/plan additional supports" (December 2, 2015). Mrs. T. shared this concern. She remarked, "I don't have the time, I think, to do all of the research and planning that I want to do to make it as effective as I think it could be" (November 18, 2015). On the survey, one special educator wrote, "I continue to feel that I should be doing more, that there is more that could be done to collaborate and support students with cognitive disabilities, yet time and resource constraints prevent us from doing everything that could/should be done" (December 2, 2015). Both special education teachers were uncomfortable with the moniker of "expert." Ms. T. remarked, "I don't know. I don't know that I have that expertise" (November 18, 2015). On the survey, one of the special education teacher authored the following statement,

> I dislike that I, as special education teacher is looked to as an expert – though I do believe that I can help and support, I don't feel that my "tool kit" is well enough equipped and appreciate that our district has other supports who can assist and

> guide. AGAIN not enough time in the day to build on my "tool kit" sufficiently and get everything else done too. (December 2, 2015)

The above quotes exemplify that the special education teachers have a conscious understanding about what it means to be a competent special education teacher, but they view themselves as incompetent when compared to that definition.

Belief. Assertion 5 - *The team members analyzed and reaffirmed their own positive beliefs about students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom, but they did not see others as having the same positive belief.* Each role group affirmed a belief that students with cognitive disabilities should be included in the general education classroom. One IA posted in the survey, "I feel strongly about children with special needs being included in the classroom" (December 2, 2015). Mrs. Y. explained about her belief,

> I'm a strong believer in that everybody had different strengths. That my kindergarten class has visual and auditory and movement and has all of those modalities so that students can access information. For the most part, those can be modified to help those students who come in with a label or a special need. (November 13, 2015)

Mrs. F. said she developed, "an increased positive focus on teaching them, no matter where they're at. That everybody can make progress. That you're not saying, 'Oh all right go color this'" (November 10, 2015). Mrs. C., an IA, verbalized the same opinion by stating, "My mindset is more on their abilities. I'm not saying that I ever focused on disabilities because I always want kids to do as much as they can on their own" (November 20, 2015).

Ms. M, another IA, described her belief, "I understand that students have their limits, every student does. But I wouldn't say I give them that limit….if you show them that they can then they can because they believe in themselves" (November 18, 2015).

Mrs. P. talked about how participating in this process, "helped me to change some of my expectations for kids with disabilities. I came in thinking, 'they can't do that.' Now I'm like, 'Well, let's try and see what they can do and then figure out what we need to change'" (November 11, 2015). She then detailed how her belief translated into action in the classroom. She noted, "The biggest thing is not judging, not judging when you walk into a room and thinking you know that student right when you walk in because you read about them in a paper" (November 11, 2015). When talking about another student, she further clarified, "As far as, like you said, not presuming that they can't do something, but asking to find out. Giving them a choice they may not have known they had" (November 11, 2015). Mrs. S. summarized a notion expressed by all IAs by affirming, "I just think about it [focusing on the ability] more. Since the July training, I think about it more than before" (November18, 2015).

The special education teachers, Ms. T. and Ms. A., talked about their own beliefs as well. Ms. A. explained how her belief impacts how she does her job. She said,

> I never say that a student can't do it. I can say they can't demonstrate consistently how to do something. But that whole, the video and everything, I really believe that, that a student who doesn't look like they're attending, won't fill out any information on a worksheet, wanders around, even makes noise the whole time, that doesn't mean that they didn't get what was being said that they aren't picking up in some way. Our job is to figure out is there a way that they can show that they got some of that. I can't say that I'm not doing my job if I can't find that but I don't know. (November 13, 2015)

Ms. T. noted, "My big takeaway from this, is that, don't look at the can't. Look at the can" (November 18, 2015). She also voiced appreciation that this topic was being addressed with a larger audience. She explained, "It was nice to hear that was being trained on, because that is not necessarily always the thought of people. It was nice that

you were like, ‘Everyone, let’s train on this because this is what people need to do’” (November 18, 2015). The quotes above illustrate the special education teachers’ beliefs.

Though all role groups felt that they possessed positive beliefs about including students with cognitive disabilities, they did not view others as having the same positive belief or efficacy. When the IAs talked about the general education teachers they worked with, they expressed varying levels of efficacy and beliefs for including students with disabilities. Mrs. P. discussed a teacher she worked with outside of the study,

> Getting her to follow the best plan for him? We're getting there. Some of it wouldn’t happen when I left the room. I’d come back ... he gets some positive reinforcement, and that wasn’t being kept up on. Just very recently when we were having the discussion I realized she didn’t view those the same way I did.” (November 11, 2015)

Mrs. C. discussed how “resistant to change” (November 20, 2015) general education teachers were. When talking about the implementation of the plans, Mrs. S. stated, “They never would have implemented it” (November 20, 2015) without the accountability of the team meetings. When discussing the special education teachers, the Mrs. S. noted, “I don’t think they feel the same about it [visuals] for some reason. Now teachers feel differently. Some feel it’s not really that beneficial” (November 20, 2015). When also discussing beliefs about visuals, Mrs. C. perceived that the “newer teachers just having lack of knowledge of using them as opposed to the one teacher that we once had here” (November 20, 2015). The above quotes emphasize the IAs perceptions of the beliefs and skills of others.

General education teachers, when speaking about other team members held similar negative views about the belief of others. When thinking about how to help Ann academically, Mrs. F stated, “What’s the next step for her. Not that Ms. M. knows, that

I'm sure I know. But I've figured out that nobody else knows either" (November 10, 2015). When talking about the special education teacher, she commented,

> The resource teacher is not going to be able to help me manage what happens in the classroom. I am really on my own. Nobody knows, we are all trying to figure it out. I used to think that there was somebody who knew and could tell me the answer, but I've learned that if I don't know it then nobody knows it. I'm all alone working with the kids I'm working with. (November 10, 2015)

Mrs. Y. talked about her success with another student and noted, "I wrote a script for him every night. He was very successful with that. No one else could do that. No IA could do it. No sped person could come in and do it" (November 13, 2015). When asked about the role of the special education teacher, Mrs. Y. answered, "The special ed person works on the [IA] schedule. Puts her in my room and takes her out of my room. I don't know" (November 13, 2015). She failed to mention instruction or other support. Mrs. F., however, did notice the instruction. She noticed, "They're pulling her out and working on skills I assume. Not that I know what those skills are, but I'm assuming they're working on those skills for her IEP" (November 10, 2015). The above quotes emphasize the claim that the general education teachers did not see others as effective.

The special education teachers also noted differences in beliefs and effectiveness of their team members. Ms. T., a special education teacher retold an experience she had when working with general education teachers,

> It's very hard doing IEPs, and you're requesting information, and you get these email back, that are like, "Rar, rar, can't do this, and can't do that, and can't do this," and I'm not putting that in the IEP. I'm not going to ... Do you realize this kid's parents are going to read this? Say something nice. One thing. The kid can do something. Please, somebody. Tell me one thing the kid can do. (November 18, 2015)

Ms. A. made a similar observation,

> I think there are some teachers who definitely believe it and they actually make efforts in their classrooms to include students to keep them engaged whether it's through those little jobs and things like that. But then you walk in and there's other teachers who every time I go in, the students are separated from everyone else, doing something different than everyone else. It's very frustrating when you see that. (November 13, 2015)

When reflecting on the July training, Ms. A. was "shocked that other teachers were coming to that training and didn't have it [a belief that all students can learn]. It makes me see the battles, the hill is even steeper to get other people to believe that" (November 13, 2015).

When discussing the beliefs and abilities of the IAs, Ms. A. noticed inconsistencies. She stated,

> I think they all have the belief that the kids will learn, can learn and for the most part, all of them ... Again, some of them come and are very creative. They're coming up with strategies and things on their own. They're taking initiative. They're doing those things and that's awesome. There are some, who I think, take care a little too much but we're working through those but I do think they all think that the students can make progress, will make progress. But there's just a different level of how much support am I going to give and getting you to the right answer versus giving you the guidance you need to get to the right answer.

The above quotes emphasize the special education teachers' viewpoints on the beliefs and efficacy of other team members. Ms. T. expressed how participating in this innovation might have been a catalyst for a change in beliefs when she said,

> I think that, because of this, it's a lot more ... They're able to see it more than they probably would have in previous years, because I think this was ... It was good for everybody. Just a good thing for everyone to see and realize and go through, and when you're going through it, and then you see the results, it changes your mindset. (November 18, 2015)

The above section explains the themes, theme-related components, and assertions which connect to RQ2 about the effects of the innovation on teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices. The two themes explored were efficacy and beliefs.

RQ 3 assertions. The last research question was, how, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectations for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress? To answer this question, I relied on data generated from monthly meetings, open-ended survey questions, and interviews. I only used the theme of student expectations to explore this research question. Table 10 displays the themes, theme-related components, and assertions connected to this research question followed by exemplifying quotes.

Table 10

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for RQ3 From Analysis of Qualitative Data

RQ3: How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectation for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress?		
Theme	Theme-Related Components	Assertion
Student Expectations	• Behavior was viewed as endemic to the children, and not changeable. • Social expectations included having the students look more like their peers. • The team did not view the team meetings as being academically focused. • The supports implemented allowed the students to demonstrate independence in task completion. • IA support was required to support students with cognitive disabilities behaviorally, academically, and socially.	Team members did not see an impact on the students' academic, behavioral, or social performance as a result of the implemented supports. They did, however, view the IA as a necessary support.

Student expectations. Assertion 6 - *Team members did not see an impact on the students' academic, behavioral, or social performance as a result of the implemented supports. They did, however, view the IA as a necessary support.* When each role group was asked to explain how the supports affected the students' performance, participants struggled to come up with responses. Mrs. S. reported, "I don't think it's made a difference behaviorally" (November 20, 2015). Ms. T. stated, "Socially, she's able to do the same requirements as her gen ed peers. I guess that's not socially, is it? Socially. I can't answer that, actually" (November 18, 2015). Mrs. F. noted, "Those meetings weren't focused really on her academics. Those meetings were more focused on her

routines" (November 10, 2015). Ms. A's explanation summarizes the team's beliefs on the outcome for students. She expressed, "Well, I think the adults have gotten more benefit than her per se, but not for lack of trying" (November 13, 2015).

When discussing the students' behavior, the team described the behavior, but did not discuss the classroom environment or supports that could be applied to help the child. For example, Mrs. P. described Kerri as "a whole different world of stubborn. If she is not going to be focused for you, I can stand up and do the hula dance and she is not going to pay attention" (August 12, 2015). Mrs. C. then mentioned that "sometimes it's like pulling teeth" (August 12, 2015) to get Kerri to finish a job. However, nobody discussed reasons why Kerri was not working or what supports she might need. When the team discussed changing the resource schedule so that Kerri could be in the general education classroom, Mrs. F. told the group, "She wouldn't really pay attention to that anyway" (August 12, 2015). The same thing occurred when discussing Ann. Mrs. Y. stated, "She just… I don't know that anything distracts her, she just like starts playing with her hair or kinda just wiggling around or kinda touching the friend next to her" (September 9, 2015). There was no discussion about how to help change the behavior. When reflecting on the implementation of a color coded system to assist Kerri in transitioning between jobs, Mrs. F. admitted,

> Since Ms. M. doesn't have to fight her to get her to do it, it probably is helping academically. Because she's more willing to get those things done, and do the focus is more on the job itself, than on whether or not you're going to do it. So probably, all right, that worked." (November 10, 2015)

Her comments demonstrate her understanding that behavior is part of the child and a reluctance to see classroom supports that may assist with behavior. In reviewing all of the supports implemented by the team, three of the 31 supports addressed behavior. Those

supports involved creating systems, such as a job schedule or color coded jobs, to enable the students to function independently.

When discussing the students' social performance, each team member discussed how the student looked more like her peers. Ms. A. noticed that "What she's doing at each table is so different than her peers but the social and academic is that she is in the classroom and doing what the others are doing" (November 13, 2015). Mrs. Y. explained the social benefit arose because Ann learned to do a skill that her peers needed help with and as a result, "she could help her friends" (November 13, 2015). In a team meeting, Mrs. F. mentioned a social need of Kerri's in that, "she will hug the people near her" (August 12, 2015), but supports to change this social behavior were not discussed. When talking about social performance for Kerri, Ms. M. explained, "Socially is kind of hard because with Kerri she'll needs her space. And I think the kids don't really understand that you can't get in her face" (November 18, 2015). In reviewing all of the supports implemented by the team, zero of the 31 supports addressed social deficits or involved the use of peers as a support.

Academic performance was defined as grade level reading, writing, and math skills. During the team meetings, the general education teachers' expressed concern for the academic performance of the identified students. When discussing computer lab time, Mrs. Y. stated, "I just know we are heading into logging on and I just know this is going to be…because she can't read the numbers and she can't read the letters" (September 9, 2015). When talking about Kerri's reading abilities, Mrs. F. remarked, "It's good, and her reading, when she came to read. When we did 'The Park' today, she could read every word of that no problem. She still can't answer, 'Where did they go? What did they go

on?'" (November 3, 2015). In the interviews, when asked about academic effects on the child, Mrs. F. said,

> But that's been pretty scripted, what do you want to do, how do you want to change it, what can we do to make her more independent. It's been more directed. There hasn't really been time to see ... Yes, you've given us things to do. It hasn't been like let's talk about Kerri and how she's doing. It's been more directed, what can we do to make her more independent? There's been more of a focus. I guess I would talk more about academic. (November 10, 2015)

Mrs. F. did not view the supports the team agreed upon and implemented for Kerri as being academic. Similarly, when Mrs. Y. was asked about the academic impact, she spoke of Ann's ability to log on to the computer (November 13, 2015). When asked specifically about letters and sound acquisition, Mrs. Y. stated, "It's hard to pinpoint and say that" (November 13. 2015). As she processed through the question, she ended with, "Not direct result, but certainly an impact of that increased communication" (November 13, 2015). The general education teachers saw the support implemented as assisting the students in others ways besides academically.

The IAs viewed academic expectations similarly. Mrs. P. explained that instruction in the resource room "doesn't necessarily need to be actual academics, but it could be things like learning to navigate a keyboard on a computer. It could be on the vocational side also" (November, 11, 2015). When Ms. M. spoke about the supports implemented she explained, "Kerri's learning is, she's not up to par with what most of her peers are doing which is part of what this is about. So it was hard to think about how we can get her to learn more" (November 18, 2015). These examples highlight how the IAs did not view the supports as having an academic focus. However, of the 31 supports implemented, seven of them were specifically to address academics. Those supports

included pre-teaching the identification number and password, aligning resource instruction, and practicing yes/no questions.

During the team meetings and interviews, the team members noted an increase in independent skills for both students. Mrs. Y. verbalized, "The biggest boost to Ann's independence in the classroom has been that computer time where they taught her to successfully log on" (November 13, 2015). Ms. T. supported that statement when she explained,

> That computer thing, she does that completely independently. If I tell her, "Go log onto the computer," if she's in the computer lab and she's told to log onto the computer, she logs onto the computer. She doesn't need assistance doing that. That's a big deal for a kindergartner, especially. (November 18, 2015).

Mrs. Y. also noted an increase in Ann's independence when entering the room from resource. She confirmed,

> She comes in and out of the classroom with a direction when she comes back in. If we're sitting at rainbow or calendar, she comes over and joins us. She knows the routine of what we're doing. She's been very successful at not just wandering, coming right back in and not needing assist with that. (November 13, 2015).

The above quotes exemplify the increase in independence displayed by Ann.

Mrs. F. articulated that Kerri now "goes through those jobs. She gets them done. She doesn't leave and try and go anywhere else. The structure has helped her independence. She knows what we expect of her better now" (November 10, 2015). She also mentioned that Kerri "knows where to put her own things" (November 10, 2015) during the morning unpacking routine. Ms. M. also commented on Kerri's increase in independence during job time. She observed, "Even one day she, because we had the folders, so instead of going and sitting there and just waiting for me she went to the basket and got out her stuff" (November 18, 2015). Ms. A. stated,

> She's made huge progress even in being able to rotate from center to center. She would not have been able to do that last year and I think that that targeted conversations and focus and plans certainly helped her be able to do that this year that she was not able to do last year. (November 13, 2015)

All of the above comments emphasize the increase in independence shown by both students. Of the 31 supports designed for the students, four were specifically designed with independence in mind. Those supports included the use of a visual schedule, rebus pictures, and environmental supports.

When discussing student expectations in the general education classroom, many team members expressed the necessity of IA support. On the survey, one general education teacher wrote, "I feel that I am to adapt the curriculum to meet her needs, but that she is not able to attend to instruction and directions without assistance" (December 2, 2015). When discussing her efficacy, Mrs. F. stated, "I don't give them busywork to do, but I haven't had to because they've had somebody there with her" (November 10, 2015). Mrs. Y. expressed similar feelings. She declared, "She needs extra support to be successful, but with the way we changed the schedule that's working out" (September 9, 2015). So further explained, "So when she has support on the job, then it comes out differently than when she tries to do something independently" (September 9, 2015).

The IAs and special education teachers shared the belief for the need for their support. Ms. M. observed, "as far as being independent during job time, we don't think she would be able to do that without someone being there with her" (November 3, 2015). Mrs. C. reiterated,

> Well, like I was saying, I think I'm very effective. I can't imagine if I weren't there. I actually sometimes worry about the times when those kids don't have someone there if they're going to be doing okay or if they're just going to be twiddling their thumbs. I don't mean by doing okay, I mean by their work or their learning or what they should be doing. (November 20, 2015)

When talking about her support to students, Mrs. S. added, “I think they would have less learning. There’d be less learning in the classroom if we weren’t there to help” (November 20, 2015). Mrs. P. explained, “I think it’s huge, the importance of having an IA in there to help those kids” (November 11, 2015). Ms. A., a special education teacher, acknowledged, “it’s the kids who are further away from grade level which are the ones that the IAs are assigned to” (November 13, 2015). When talking about Ann’s progress, Ms. T. set the condition of “with the support” (November 18, 2015) on her academic progress. The above quotes underscore the necessity of students with cognitive disabilities having IA support.

In discussing IA support, two team members discussed some of the drawbacks. Ms. M. observed,

> The other thing she had to do with cutting. So she did half, I did half, but that was the gist of the job. That’s what I mean by dependency. She needs me to verbally tell her to do this, move on to this, or do you need help? (November 3, 2015)

Mrs. F. also noted Kerri’s dependency. She stated,

> She comes in with the line, but someone stands by her to keep her in the line. Someone carries her backpack, someone meets her at the gate. So they meet her at the gate, they carry her backpack in, they stand with her in the line. (September 9, 2015)

During that same meeting, Mrs. F. stated her desire to change the dependency. She said, “I would like her to do it, to bring in her own backpack” (September 9, 2015). When talking about a time when Kerri did not have an IA with her Mrs. F. indicated that “last week, she sat and took off her shoes and socks and put them back on instead of work on the computer” (September 9, 2015). Mrs. F. also explained that if Kerri did not have and IA, “she would go to the counter and get a pointer, unless somebody was there to keep her on task (November 3, 2015). The fact that without the IA, the student was not able to

follow directions demonstrated the level of dependency on the IA. The following exchange shows how Mrs. C. reflected on her role as an IA and how she might be developing dependency:

> Mrs. C.: That's where those visuals once again would come in handy because then I wouldn't be repeating. I could just have my little chart with my little Velcro things and be like, okay, or they could rely on that versus me. Right now, I'm the visual chart only.
>
> Researcher: You're the support now. You're not necessarily implementing supports in terms of implementing visuals or teaching kids how to do this without you. You are the one who is the support.
>
> Mrs. C.: Yes. (November 20, 2015)

The above section explores the theme of student expectations in order to answer the research question about the effect the innovation had on the team's views about the student. The quotes highlight the viewpoint that students with cognitive disabilities require an IA to make academic, social, and behavior progress. They also illustrate the level of dependency already shown by the students.

Other notable results. The analysis of qualitative data surfaced information that I found important, though not connected to any research question. Using this data, I generated the theme of sustainability. Table 11 displays the themes, theme-related components, and assertion followed by exemplifying quotes.

Table 11

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for Notable Results From Analysis of Qualitative Data

Theme	Theme-Related Components	Assertion
Sustainability	• The team members valued the monthly team meetings and felt they should be continued. • The team noted concerns about the sustainability of the meetings. • To continue the conversations, alternate methods would need to be explored.	Though the team valued the monthly meetings focused on two students, they did not find them sustainable.

Sustainability. Assertion 7 – *Though the team valued the monthly meetings focused on two students, they did not find them sustainable.* When reflecting on the team meetings, the team members found them of value. Mrs. Y. mentioned "a positive outcome of those meetings" several times during her interview (November 13, 2015). Mrs. F. noted, "It would be great to be able to talk with everybody who works with her, at a time when I don't have the rest of the kids in here" (November 10, 2015), indicating she found value in the meetings. Special education teachers also found the meetings "beneficial" (November 18, 2015) and saw "the value in it" (November 13, 2015). When the principal reflected on the meetings, she also noted the importance of them (November 10, 2015). Mrs. C. reflected on the meetings and asked, "This is a new strategy for us, having these meetings and bringing all of us together and brainstorming together. Is this something that we could maybe see in the future for us?" Her question demonstrates the value she, as an IA, found in the meetings.

When discussing drawbacks to the meetings, team members also listed concerns. On the survey, one general education teacher wrote, "the practical application of this is a whole other problem" (December 2, 2015). Some of the application issues were noted by other team members. Mrs. F.'s concern was the lack of academic focus. She found the meetings "had a focus on how she could be more independent during those routine times" (November 10, 2015) instead of "on how I could help her academically do more, where she needs to go academically. Another concern was time" (November 10, 2015). Ms. A. voiced,

> Sitting down and getting everybody to commit that time doesn't typically happen. It doesn't work to find time where the aides can stay after school or teacher can commit to being there. It doesn't happen in normal everyday activities. It's going to be very hard to sustain that same kind of constant communication and dialogue. (November 13, 2015)

She also explained that this innovation focused on two students, but "it's not reasonable to think that I'm going to be able to meet with every teacher to be able to have that one hour a month to talk about every student" (November 13, 2015). Ms. T. reiterated this sentiment when she explained, "Time, yes, because it's not only getting together, but it does take work then to go through and follow through. But it all goes back to time. It all goes back to time" (November 18, 2015).

Mrs. Y., a general education teacher, echoed both special education teachers when she said, "I believe that because of the time constraints the kind of model that could be successfully implemented would maybe have restricts [sic]" (November 13, 2015). Mrs. W., the principal, spoke more specifically about time. She reinforced that IAs cannot stay after work "because we've got to pay them and it [the meetings] has to happen outside of instruction time" (November 10, 2015). She explicated, "We don't have enough aide

allocation. Whatever aide hours we have, it's got to be student contact time because we don't even have enough for student contact time" (November 10, 2015). She explained that for the meetings to continue as they were, "there would be a financial impact" (November 10, 2015).

In order to continue the meetings, the team would have to propose alternate methods of including everybody while still maintaining the conversations. When asked about how to best revise the current model, Mrs. Y.'s opinion was,

> If you were going to keep a piece of it, I would say keeping that launch. Before the student comes and then you know two weeks after the student so you all have some experience with the student. That launch is the critical part. That sets up for the rest of the year. (November 13, 2015)

She also emphasized how she "would like a periodic [sic] scheduled meeting with a special education teacher and myself that we could just meet and touch base" (November 13, 2015).

Ms. A. contemplated, "Maybe we can prioritize just with these certain students. Not every student needs that level" (November 13, 2015). Mrs. W. speculated about the same idea. She suggested, "Maybe the next progression is, me we pinpoint the kiddos that have much more high need, that have one or multiple aides working with them and that's a starting point" (November 10, 2015). Mrs. W. noted, "In reality the resource teacher and the gen ed teacher collaborate more and then somehow bring in the IAs, but that can't be as frequent" (November 10, 2015). She also pondered the idea of including the general education teacher in the weekly meeting scheduled with the special education teachers and the IAs. She pondered,

> If you were really strategic you could figure out how the gen ed person could come in, over the course of a month, those four weeks, or the quarter, to where

> they are touching base at least once a quarter. With super organization skills you could figure that out and get them on the calendar. (November 10, 2015)

In all thoughts about how to continue these beneficial conversations, Mrs. W. struggled with the balance of providing support for students in the classroom while still maintaining the high level of collaboration and communication. Her ending thought was, "It's a judgement call and granted collaboration and communication is key at the expense of direct service, I don't know" (November 10, 2015). All of the above comments reflect the teams desire to continue the meetings and their thoughts on possible changes to the meetings.

Summary of Results

On the Inclusive Practices Survey, there were no statistically significant changes in the constructs of belief or collaboration. Due to the small numbers of participants, I did not calculate statistical significance for the efficacy construct. All participants agreed that there was an increase in the level of collaboration. The team disagreed with the statement that their beliefs changed as a result of participating in this experience. General education teachers and special education teacher agreed that participating in this experience changed their abilities, while IAs disagreed. All team members agreed that they learned new strategies and ways of thinking about including students with cognitive disabilities.

Analysis of the qualitative data yielded seven assertions. The team meetings resulted in the team being more connected across the individual role group and provided a venue for all team members to share their unique expertise. Having an outside facilitator was an important component of the team meetings. All team members admitted to learning new strategies and analyzed their own areas of strength and need in including students with cognitive disabilities. Though the team members all expressed their own

positive beliefs about including students with cognitive disabilities, they did not believe members of other role groups had the same belief or efficacy. Team members did not observe an impact on the students' academic, behavioral, or social performance as a result of the supports. They did, however, view the IA as a necessary support for the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities. Finally, the team members found the monthly meetings valuable, but they did not believe them to be sustainable. In the next section, I will present interpretations and discussion of the results.

Discussion

I began this research project with the intention of increasing collaboration between general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs of students with cognitive disabilities. The introduction of a collaborative Community of Practice to support students with disabilities represented a fundamental change in the professional development of the teachers and IAs. First, this type of professional development had not been conducted before in my district. Trainings have been targeted for one of the three groups of people, but not all three together. Bringing the three groups together to discuss and plan for students with cognitive disabilities was a shift in addressing how to teach students with disabilities. Additionally, by planning together, there was a new level of collaboration focused on increasing the achievement for low performing students. Equally important, applying new strategies to support students with disabilities was "embedded in the process of acquiring the new knowledge" (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005, p. 54). This effort aimed to build capacity within the teams, increase the teachers' and IAs' self-efficacies for inclusion, and thus create a sustainable, fundamental change.

This section begins with a discussion of how the quantitative and qualitative data complement each other and were integrated to answer the research questions. Next, I compare and contrast the results from this study with established theory and previous research. Based on these two sections, I assert the lessons I learned about implementing a team planning protocol. In the fourth section, I present the strengths and limitations of this study. Next, I delineate other valuable research topics that have surfaced as a result of this study. I conclude this section with my personal learnings from my experiences in earning a doctorate in education.

Complementarity and Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

In this research study, I utilized a mixed methods approach to answer the research questions as outline below.

- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general, and special education teachers?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs?
- How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectation for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress?

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) explained that one of the strengths in mixed methods study is the ability to gather information from multiple perspectives to "provide a complex picture of the situation" (p. 299). Because the number of participants in this

action research mixed methods study was small, it was important to gather both data types to fully understand the impact of the innovation. In this mixed methods study, I used the quantitative data from the Inclusive Practices Survey to gauge participants' perceptions about collaboration, efficacy, and beliefs both before and after receiving the innovation. Using the qualitative data, I gathered more specific information about collaboration, efficacy, and beliefs to answer the research questions and to understand the nuances of including students with cognitive disabilities in general education settings. In this study, the qualitative data complemented the quantitative data as explained below for each research question.

Research question one. *How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol influence collaboration among the IAs, general education teachers, and special education teachers?* To answer this research question, I compared the data from the collaboration construct and the evaluative questions of the Inclusive Practices Survey with the data from the first three assertions about expertise, connectivity, and the researcher's role. The lack of increase in the mean scores of the collaboration construct between the survey administrations suggests that collaboration among the participants was not impacted by this innovation. However, results from the Inclusive Practices post survey evaluative questions showed participants agreed this innovation changed the level of collaboration among the team members. This quantitative data is supported by the qualitative data. During the team meetings, team members identified problem areas and worked together to develop a plan to solve those problems. The team members each shared their unique perspectives on the students, which led the team to have a deeper understanding of the problem and develop a more robust plan. As a

result of the team meetings, the team reported increased connectedness to each other. The increased connectedness caused increased communication across role-groups which allowed for the coordination of instructional activities and feedback to the team members. More importantly, the IAs were valued as integral part of the team. Finally, the presence of a facilitator with a high level of expertise in including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom aided in the establishment of increased communication. The complementarity of the data demonstrates that implementing a team planning protocol strengthened collaboration and communication.

Research question two. *How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol change teacher efficacy in implementing inclusive practices for general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs?* To answer this research question, I compared both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was comprised of the responses to both the efficacy and belief constructs as well as the evaluative questions posed during the second administration of the Inclusive Practices survey. On the efficacy construct, the mean level of agreement decreased between the two survey administrations. However, both the general education and special education teachers agreed that participation in the monthly meetings increased their level of efficacy. The IAs disagreed. There was a slight increase in the mean level of agreement on the belief construct, but it was not statistically significant. The team also did not agree that participating in this experience changed their beliefs. Quantitative data indicates no change in efficacy as a result of the implementation of the team planning protocol.

The qualitative data from the efficacy and belief assertions complements the quantitative data. In interviews, team members discussed their new learning as a result of

participating in the professional development and monthly team meetings. The extent of the learning varied by role group. IAs expressed that they remembered previously used strategies and applied strategies with other students. General education teachers viewed themselves as efficacious in making students with cognitive disabilities feel included in the classroom, but had questions about academic expectations. Special education teachers did not feel effective their jobs. In terms of beliefs about including students with cognitive disabilities, all role groups expressed a belief in inclusion. However, all role groups felt that members of other role groups did not hold the same belief or efficacy. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data led to the conclusion that the implementation of a team planning protocol had minimal influence on efficacy for any of the role groups.

Research question three. *How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a team planning protocol affect the team's expectation for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress?* To answer this research question, I relied solely on qualitative data captured from the analysis of the team meetings compared to the analysis of the interviews. This data was reflected in the theme of student expectations. In early team meetings, student behavior was viewed as internal to the child. This view did not change over the course of the research. Similarly, the social expectations for the children were unchanged. The team did not implement supports that utilized peers to assist the children or foster social interactions. When talking about social expectations, the team equated social progress with having the children look more like their peers. Academically, the team's conversations consisted of the tasks the students could not accomplish. In order for the students to complete the academic task satisfactorily, the IA needed to be present.

Overall, the implementation of a team planning protocol had limited effect on the team's expectations for their students' behavior, social, and academic progress.

Alignment to Theory and Previous Research

The first theory to drive this research project was the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a theory which states that one's behavior is predicted by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). According to Ajzen (1991), if one possesses positive beliefs, one is more likely to perform a behavior. In this study, all participants expressed positive beliefs, in both the quantitative and qualitative data, about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. The second aspect of TPB is subjective norms, or the perceived approval or disapproval of others in the community. Interestingly, in this study, all role groups expressed that they did not see members of other role groups as having the same beliefs or expertise as they did. This finding expanded upon a study conducted by Cook et al. (1999) in which special education teachers felt that general education teachers did not have the necessary skills to include students with disabilities. In this study, none of the role groups felt other role groups had the necessary skills. The increased collaboration, connectivity, and communication among the team, however, shows evidence that team members were beginning to learn more about each other's roles, beliefs, and abilities in the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities. Continued meetings would positively impact the subjective norms of the team. The final tenet of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1972) theory is perceived behavioral control, or the likelihood of success when performing the identified behavior. In this research study, participants all admitted to gaining new knowledge and using these newly learned skills with other students. By experiencing

success, participants increased the likelihood of continuing these newly learned skills. A comment made by Ms. M.'s exemplified her increase in perceived behavioral control. She stated,

> Even though, I've heard it mentioned I just wouldn't know how to implement it. I feel like now, seeing and hearing it, being told how to do it, I feel like in the future if I had to suggest it to a teacher then I feel comfortable that I could tell them, "Maybe this will work better for me as well as the student." It taught me a little bit more how to handle this kind of situation. (November 18, 2015)

Because two of the three principles of TPB were present in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, the participants may be more likely to perform those behaviors to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. Some of those behaviors would include collaborating to plan for modifications to curriculum or making social supports.

Many studies referenced in the Literature Review explored the connection between the beliefs of the general education teachers and the willingness to include students with cognitive disabilities (Bender et al., 1995; Glazzard, 2011; Hwang & Evans, 2011; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Wilczenski, 1995). Mortier et al. (2010) found that having a positive attitude, believing in the child, and adjusting instruction were necessary components for successful inclusion. The general education teachers in this study expressed their open attitude and were willing to make adjustments in instruction. Their expectations for the child, though, were dependent upon the availability of an IA. The general education teachers' questions about how to assess the children with disabilities reflects the research that general education teachers identified their abilities to adapt materials and curriculum, monitor behavior, and give instructional assistance as weaknesses (Buell et al., 1999).

The second theory used in this study was the self-efficacy tenet from Bandura's (1993) Social-Cognitive Theory, which states that one's beliefs influences one's actions, efforts, motivation, and thoughts . According to Bandura, self-efficacy is created through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional reactions. In this research project, each role group expressed different levels of self-efficacy. General education teachers felt very efficacious in including students with cognitive disabilities. However, special education teachers perceived themselves as not effective. IAs perceived themselves as effective and admitted applying discussed strategies to other situations. Since self-efficacy is developed through mastery experiences, I ponder if the participant's years of experience in their position was a mitigating factor in their self-efficacy. The general education teachers both had approximately 30 years of experience in kindergarten with a wealth of professional development on developmental levels in a kindergarten aged children. However, both special education teachers had less than four years of experience, with one of them being in her first year. Orr's (2009) study found that special education teachers with three years or less of experience did not feel prepared to foster inclusion in their schools. Those findings mirrored the results in this study in that the special education teachers felt ineffective and did not feel like experts. If special education teachers do not feel effective in performing their responsibilities, they cannot serve as leaders in the implementation of inclusive practices as recommended by Sayeski (2009) and York-Barr et al. (2005).

The final theory that I utilized as I defined the problem of practice and identified possible solutions was Communities of Practice (CoP). In this action research, I aspired to assist in the creation of a CoP where the supports necessary for students with cognitive

disabilities became the topic of mutual interest to spark conversations and result in shared learning. According to Wenger (2000a), there are several elements necessary for the formation of a CoP. The first are events which bring the community together. The innovation of implementing a shared training experience and participating in monthly meetings were the events that provided the structure for the establishment of this new CoP. A second element is connectivity. Building a community is a process of "enabling a rich fabric of connectivity among people" (p. 6). The innovation allowed the separate role groups to become more connected to each other and build relationships with each other. By doing so, the individual role groups began to see the perspective of others, though not yet the expertise of others. Beginning to trust each other's expertise is an initial step in the formation of the CoP (Wenger, 2000a). One particular group to become a trusted partner in the community's interactions was the IAs. Being seen as more of a team member with expertise allowed them to more fully participate in the budding CoP.

Though a CoP began to form, there were some needed elements that did not materialize. According to Wenger (2000a), internal leadership is a necessity for the community to develop. The roles I served hindered the growth of this CoP. My role as the broker, or intermediary (Wenger, 1998), was necessary to link the separate role groups together into a broader CoP. However, as the facilitator with expertise in both the process and the content of including students with cognitive disabilities, I had more ownership than the individual members of the CoP. As an external leader, I was the reason the CoP came together and stayed together. Another element necessary for the formation of a fully functioning CoP is when the community "is ready to take active ownership of its practice" (Wenger, 2000b, p. 8) by "finding gaps in its knowledge, and creating a

learning agenda" (Wenger, 2000b, p. 8). This CoP was in the coalescing stage (Wenger, 1999) where they were still finding the value in the learning together and developing a community. They had not yet decided on their own learning needs, nor had they developed a plan to address those needs.

Practical Implications

The purpose of this research study was to increase collaboration between special educators, general educators, and IAs supporting students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. During the course of the study, I gleaned important insights about the necessity of increased collaboration among these three role groups. In all of the interviews, I heard participants reference that they did not know what curriculum was being taught or how the children were performing in other settings. Hearing this emphasized the dichotomous existence of special education and general education classrooms. A dichotomous existence of the two entities is the antithesis of inclusion. When students with cognitive disabilities are pulled out of the general education classroom for specialized instruction in a resource classroom, they are missing instruction that their general education peers are receiving and general education teachers are unaware of how they are being instructed. Likewise, special education teachers are uninformed of how the students are performing or what strategies are being utilized in the general education environment.

Participants also expressed their desire to be more knowledgeable about the happenings in the other environments. Montgomery and Mirenda (2014) explained that general and special educators both have unique skills in educating students with disabilities, but they may not know the roles of the other. One of the outcomes of this

innovation was increased communication across the role groups, which allowed for the sharing of perspectives, strategies, and information about the children. This level of communication is vital when including students with cognitive disabilities in general education classrooms to ensure meaningful access to general education curriculum and provide for social interactions while in the general education classroom (Almazan, 2009). Without the communication, schools are not really including children with cognitive disabilities.

Another positive outcome of the communication was the coordination of teaching objectives so that the instruction in the resource room occurred prior to the instruction in the general education room for one student. Because the student was familiar with the material prior to its introduction in general education, she was able to meaningfully access the content. This pre-teaching allowed for the student to have a more successful inclusion experience. Her success would not have occurred without the increased communication. When inclusion is most successful, special education teachers are collaboratively planning and troubleshooting with other teachers (Eisenman et al., 2011). Jones, Ratcliff, Sheehan, and Hunt (2012) found that in a self-contained classroom with teachers and IAs, regularly scheduled meetings are essential to create a collaborative team. I contend that when students are removed from the general education classroom for remedial instruction or therapy, regularly scheduled meetings to increase communication and knowledge are mandatory for a successful inclusion experience.

When students with cognitive disabilities are included in the general education classroom for portions of their day, the scheduling of services is a critical factor that teams must consider. At one of the team meetings, the special education teachers realized

that one of the children was removed from the classroom at a crucial instruction time to receive special education services. Because of the increased communication, this problem was resolved. However, in the interview with the other general education teacher, she noted that her student receives speech and/or occupational therapy every morning a mere 15 minutes after school starts. The timing of these services prevented the student from being independent in unpacking her backpack, a task which she should be able to do. Since she receives all of her services and instruction outside of the general education classroom, the student experiences a disjointed day. As a result, the general education teacher only sees the student for short bursts of time and is not apprised of the instruction occurring during those therapies. When this occurs, it becomes easier to understand how the mentality of "your student and my student" develops. The general education teacher has a lack of ownership (Orr, 2009) of the special education student. By increasing the level of collaboration, perhaps students with disabilities can truly be viewed as "our students."

One comment made during an interview with the special education teacher resonated with me. She noted that the adult participants received more benefit than the students. As I reflected more on this comment, I concluded that consistency of adults is an essential outcome of increased collaboration. By having focused conversations about the students, all of the adults agreed upon consistent expectations for the children. This was particularly important for one of the students who has three IAs working with her throughout her school day. Through dialogue, the team realized that some adults were fostering independence, while others were not. The team was able to formulate agreements so that there was consistency among the adults. By meeting together, the

team crafted plans and developed unified expectations about how they would all behave with the student. This increased consistency in adult behavior has to lead to increased consistency in student behavior.

One theme to emerge from the qualitative data was the universal belief that an IA was required whenever students with cognitive disabilities were in the general education classroom. This theme complemented the findings found by Idol (2006) in which many teachers believed that the inclusion of students with disabilities required the presence of another adult. The underlying assumption is that the IA is the support. When discussing one of the student's behaviors, the teacher noted that if the IA were not present, the student would "dance around the room" (November 3, 2015). This example accentuated the reliance on the IA to support the student. The opposing view is that the IA teaches the student strategies and routines or utilizes peer support so that the IA is not necessary. In the above example, the IA would have utilized a social story or picture cues to teach the student appropriate behavior so that when the IA is not present, the student would stay with the group. Giangreco (2009) cites the use of classroom accommodations, peer supports, and natural, environmental supports as alternatives to the overreliance on IAs. In addition to peer supports, Mortier et al. (2009) found that using modifications and adaptations to the curriculum reduced the necessity of other adults. With continued focused conversation, the team could implement supports to reduce the reliance on IAs and increase student independence.

A final note on the importance of the collaboration connects to the sustainability of the model as implemented for this project. All participants articulated their belief in the importance of meeting together as a team to plan for the needs of the two identified

students. However, all participants, including the principal, expressed concern about the feasibility of sustaining the model as implemented for this study. In order for a CoP to develop, the leaders of the school have to provide members time to participate in the CoP (Wenger, 1999). The principal of the school expressed concern about the budget constraints, which prevented the IAs from attending meetings outside of their contracted hours. Montgomery and Mirenda (2014) noted that logistics of collaboration can prevent its regular use in schools. However, they also stated, "in order for collaboration to be successful, time is needed for meetings between members" (p. 29). Because the collaboration proved to be beneficial for all three role groups, the school or district level administration has to investigate means to support it. Many and Schmidt (2013) state that administrators "must insist that special educators work alongside their general education colleagues as contributing members of collaborative teams" (p. 1). In the interviews, all team members suggested alternatives to the current model which may be more sustainable. Some of those included inviting general education teachers to the weekly IA meetings, using technology to communicate, and prioritizing students so that the most impacted have regularly scheduled meetings. Whichever format is utilized, the regular communication is essential to increased collaboration.

Strengths and Limitations

In action research, validity is defined as the extent to which the research generates new knowledge in the local setting, involves major stakeholders, educates the participants, and focuses on the outcomes which address the original problem (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Herr and Anderson also state that a study can be considered acceptable with a minimum of three of these areas addressed. To address the involvement of the

stakeholders, I employed participant review. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), participant review is a method in which the researchers ask the participants to review the synthesis of the transcripts for accuracy of representation. I presented the themes from analysis to each role group and asked them to provide feedback. Overwhelmingly, all groups discussed and agreed with the themes. This method of participant review is an example of dialogic validity in which the "methods, evidence, and findings resonate with the community of practice" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 70). Giving the participants an option to review the findings allowed them to be co-researchers and confirm or deny the themes I found. By engaging in the dialogue about the outcomes, the team's voice was fully represented. This level of collaboration is a hallmark of action research.

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), process validity involves the learning that occurs by the participants as they work to solve problems of their workplace. The fact that this study involved monthly meetings in which the team reviewed the plans from the previous meeting and analyzed the extent to which they worked is an example of process validity. The team reflected on their practices to draft a plan of action for the next month based on the new knowledge gained. A second aspect of process validity is the inclusion of multiple perspectives in gathering evidence. By corroborating evidence from the themes generated from the survey, interviews from all four role groups, and meeting transcripts, I triangulated data across methods (Creswell, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Triangulating different data sources to find convergence and divergence of data provides the researcher with stronger justification for any claims made (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure catalytic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015), in which I monitored the shifts in my own understandings as a researcher and practitioner, I utilized field notes. After each monthly meeting, I recorded my own observations and thoughts about what occurred and reflected on the extent to which change occurred in my own thinking, in the setting, in the participants, and in the process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). These notes were an important means to monitor the amount and areas of change that occurred as a result of this innovation. Additionally, the interview questions asked the practitioners to reflect on changes in their practice as a result of participation in this project. All of the research methods, the survey, the interviews, the monthly meetings, and the researcher field notes, were avenues to document catalytic validity.

A limitation of this study was the low Cronbach alpha coefficients for the constructs of collaboration and beliefs on the final administration of the Inclusive Practices survey. When the Cronbach alpha coefficients are in the questionable range ($\alpha = 0.68$) and unacceptable range ($\alpha = 0.45$), interpretations should be made with caution as this group of participants may not have answered the questions consistently. However, the findings in this study were supported by qualitative data to offset the questionable constructs.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of participation from all of the members of the IEP team for both of these students. The IEP team includes special education teachers, general education teachers, parents, administrators, and related service providers (i.e., occupational and speech therapists). Herr and Anderson (2015) denote democratic validity as being the extent to which collaboration occurs from all parties who have an interest in the topic being investigated. To keep this study small, I

opted to focus on only three of the team members in addition to the IAs. However, by not including some of the IEP team members who have knowledge, insights, and experience in inclusion in general and specifically about the two students with cognitive disabilities, I have limited the depth of collaboration that can occur. The lack of democratic validity is a limitation in this study.

Future Research

A unique feature of action research is its iterative cycles in which data from one cycle informs the next (Riel, 2010). After completing this round of action research, the next steps for future cycles are evident. First, some team members found the team meetings to be focused on routines and building independence. They expressed a desire to have the meetings more concentrated on academic achievement. With this information in mind, the next cycle of action research has a dual purpose: to increase academic achievement while decreasing adult support. In order to achieve this, the team needs to continue the meetings using the Routine Based Planning protocol, but focus the discussion on academic routines. Through these conversations, the team can identify a specific academic task (i.e., sentence writing), thoroughly analyze the child's abilities and disabilities in relation to that task, then develop a plan to change the task or support the student in completing the task. An addition to this discussion would be the explicit use of The Nine Types of Curriculum Adaptations (Browning Wright, 2005) to guide the team in selecting alternate support methods. As recommended by Sayeski (2009), the focus of the subsequent conversations would be on the change in learning that resulted from the implemented accommodations. The shift in the discussion would produce data about the

student's academic achievement, as well as other supports utilized. If other supports are utilized, I question if the team would still perceive the IA as a necessity.

A second recommendation for the next cycle of action research arises from the overwhelming concern for sustainability. The importance of having regularly scheduled meetings is evident in the literature (Jones et al., 2012; Many & Schmidt, 2013; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014) and was equally apparent in the data from this action research project. Based on the data collected in this study, the team has a commitment and desire to continue to meet. However, financial obligations, scheduling, and other commitments can be a barrier to regular meeting. Future research should involve alternate means of collaborating and the effects of those collaboration attempts on the connectivity of the team.

Personal Learning and Reflections

According to Grogan et al. (2007), an outcome of a participating in an action research educational doctorate (Ed. D.) program is the candidate becomes a reflective practitioner and an academic researcher in their own setting. By designing, implementing, and analyzing the outcomes of this action research project, I have grown as both a researcher and an educational practitioner. As a researcher, I have gained a greater understanding of the research process. I understand the value of applying theory to help one to define a problem and inform a solution. The use of a plausible theory can help to guide the research questions and methods for the research. Finally, I've learned the value of a mixed-methods study. When conducting research, quantitative data can provide one angle into the participants' views. By incorporating qualitative data, that understanding can be deepened and a richer story can be understood.

All of my knowledge about research has helped to transform my thought process when encountering a problem in my local context. As a practitioner, I now begin by asking questions and garnering the perspective of all stakeholders in order to have a more solid understanding of the current situation. In a project that I am currently undertaking, I am gathering information through the use of a survey with qualitative and quantitative questions. From here, I am now able to access and understand research conducted by others in order to help shed light on the problem or to find possible solutions. I will then implement a cycle of action research based on solid data to solve the problem and utilize the data to refine future action. My newly found research background obtained through completing this Ed. D. program means that I think about and react to problems in my work place differently than I had before. I am a more analytical, focused, and reflective practitioner with an understanding of the value of research in guiding decisions. My learning from completing this Ed. D. program, conducting this study, and writing this dissertation is perfectly reflected in a quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes. As he so eloquently stated, "The mind, once expanded to the dimensions of larger ideas, never returns to its original size" (Holmes, n.d.). I am forever changed as a researcher and a practitioner.

Conclusion

This action research project began as a means of developing collaboration among general educators, special educators, and IAs working with students with cognitive disabilities in the general education setting. Through the implementation of the action research, collaboration and communication was increased for the team for duration of the project. However, sustainability of the model was a concern for the team. The

implementation of the project did not alter efficacy or beliefs about student performance. By engaging in the process, however, I changed as a researcher and a practitioner.

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APPENDIX A

ROUTINE BASED PLANNING ANALYSIS

Routine Based Planning Analysis

Adapted from (June Downing, 2009; Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012)

Subject/ Instructional Routine	What are all students expected to do (demands of the setting)?	What can the student with disabilities do?	What is preventing the student from participating?	What skills are important to teach? What supports are required? How can the student participate (fully or partially)

APPENDIX B

UNIFIED PLAN OF SUPPORT

Unified Plan of Support (UPS; Hunt et al., 2001)

Student: _____ Team Members Present: _____
Date: _____ _____

Educational Supports (i.e. adaptations, curricular modifications, instructional modifications, peer supports)		
Supports	Person Responsible	Implementation Rating
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
Social Supports (i.e. Buddy System, circles of support, interactive media, social facilitation)		
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
		☐ Fully ☐ Mod. Well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all

APPENDIX C

CONSENT LETTER

Title of research study: Three's A Team: Increasing Collaboration Among Instructional Assistants, General, and Special Educators Teaching Students with Disabilities

Investigator: Scott Marley and Jo Shurman

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

I invite you to take part in a research study because you are a member of the team of teachers and instructional assistants working with two students with cognitive disabilities who are included in general education classroom for the majority of their day.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this proposed action research study will be to explore using professional development and a structured team meeting format to foster collaboration as a means to physically, socially, and academically include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education environment.

How long will the research last?

The research will begin in July 2015 and continue through December 2015. The research will begin with the completion of an electronic survey in July 2015. There will be one three-hour training that will occur on July 24, 2015. Starting in August 2015, monthly team meetings will be held with the general education teachers, special education teacher, and instructional assistants. This meeting will be recorded. Finally, in December 2015, you will participate in an hour long interview with Jo Shurman. Monthly meetings and interviews will occur during the regularly scheduled work week. All interviews will be scheduled at mutually agreeable times.

How many people will be studied?

The general education teachers, special education teacher, and instructional assistants supporting two first grade students with cognitive disabilities will be part of the study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

If you opt to participate, you will participate in a 15 minute online survey, one three hour professional development opportunity, monthly hour long meetings, and an hour long interview. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There are no foreseen risks to participating in the research study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

I cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include learning more strategies to assist the students with whom you work. By learning and implementing new strategies, you will be able to model those strategies for others who work with students with disabilities.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. I cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the university board that reviews research and federal agencies who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your information and rights. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but all names will be pseudonyms.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to Scott Marley at (480)727-7237 (scott.marley@asu.edu) or Jo Shurman at 602-770-5753 (jshurman@asu.edu).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Title: Three's A Team: Increasing Collaboration Among Instructional Assistants, General, and Special Educators Teaching Students with Disabilities

I am a doctoral candidate under the direction of Dr. Scott Marley in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore using professional development and a structured team meeting format to foster collaboration as a means to physically, socially, and academically include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education environment.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve participating in one hour-long interview to describe your perspective of the collaboration between general education teachers, special education teachers, and instructional assistants. The interview will occur at a mutually agreed upon time and will be audio recorded for later transcription. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Your participation in the study provides an important benefits in the form of administrative perspective on the level of collaboration, the impact on the students with disabilities, and the feasibility of continuing with monthly meetings. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms for people and institutions will be used, though complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the small size of the study. Your responses will be confidential and only viewed by my professor and me. The results of this study may be used in my dissertation, reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Scott Marley at (480) 727-7237 (scott.marley@asu.edu) or Jo Shurman at (602)-770-5753 (jshurman@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Scott Marley
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
-
Scott.Marley@asu.edu

Dear Scott Marley:

On 5/27/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Three's a Team: Increasing Collaboration Among Instructional Assistants, General, and Special Educators Teaching Students with Disabilities
Investigator:	Scott Marley
IRB ID:	STUDY00002419
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Inclusive Practices Survey (5).pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Shurman IRB application (4) (1).docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Consent Form Revised 5.20.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Kyrene Research Committee Approval, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Unified Plan of Support.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/27/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Jo Shurman
Jo Shurman

APPENDIX E

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES SURVEY

Inclusive Practices Survey

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey to explore beliefs and practices related to the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom. This survey contains three sections of question containing a total of 30 questions. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10 minutes.

Your responses are anonymous and no identifying information is collected in this survey. The results of this study will be used to inform future rounds of research.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your responses to the questionnaire indicate your consent to participate. You may stop participating in this study at any time and may skip any questions you choose.

If you have any questions about the study or the results, please contact Jo Shurman at JShurman@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Jo Shurman

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Collaboration **Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.**					
1.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **on a regular ongoing basis.**				
2.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to plan for instruction of students with cognitive disabilities.**				
3.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to adapt classroom materials for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom.**				
4.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to develop and implement behavior supports used in the general education classroom.**				
5.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to provide meaningful social interactions for the child with cognitive disabilities when in the general education classroom.**				
6.	I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to use assistive technology to enable the student with disabilities to participate in daily lessons in the general education classroom.**				

7.	I bring my own expertise to the table when working with the child's team to support inclusion in the general education classroom.				
8.	I rely on the expertise of others when working with the child's team to support inclusion in the general education classroom.				

Collaboration Open Ended Questions:

Initial Survey:

In the past, how frequently has your team collaborated to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

What would you expect to be the outcomes of a structured planning time?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to collaboration that I didn't ask about.

Follow-Up Survey:

Reflect on your responses from the first time you took the survey in July and now. Were your answers to the collaboration questions different?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.				
Participating in this experience changed the level of collaboration among my team (general ed, special ed, and IA).				
I learned strategies to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

How has the monthly meetings influenced the collaboration among the team?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to collaboration that I didn't ask about.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Beliefs **Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.**					
9.	I believe that students with cognitive disabilities should be taught in the general education classroom.				
10.	I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn social skills in the general education classroom.				
11.	I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn academics in the general education classroom.				
12.	I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn age appropriate behavior in the general education classroom.				
13.	I believe that learning to complete tasks independently is important for students with cognitive disabilities.				
14.	Other team members hold similar beliefs about educating students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
15.	I believe that collaborating with other professionals is necessary in order teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

Beliefs Open Ended Questions:

Initial Survey:

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to beliefs that I didn't ask about.

Follow-Up Survey:

Reflect on your responses from the first time you took the survey in July and now. Were your answers to the belief questions different?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.				
Participating in this experience changed my beliefs about educating students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
I learned different ways of thinking about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

How has the implementation of the planning sessions impacted your thinking about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to beliefs that I didn't ask about.

Demographic Information

What grade level do you primarily teach? (If you are an IA, what grade level do you primarily work with?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

Discuss your previous experiences in teaching students with disabilities.

How many classes/workshops/trainings have you attended on teaching students with cognitive disabilities?

What has been the content of the classes/trainings/workshops you have attended?

How many years have you been working in education?

How many years have you been in your current position?

What is your role in educating students with cognitive disabilities?

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Instructional Assistant

The next section is an efficacy section. The user will select their role (IA, General Ed Teacher or Special Ed teacher) and then answer the question for that role only.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
General Education Teacher Efficacy **Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.**					
16.	I am able to create a classroom environment in which all students are accepted.				
17.	I am able to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities into my teaching.				
18.	I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
19.	I can adapt the materials used in the classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.				
20.	I can adjust my questions so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in class discussions.				
21.	I can establish classroom management systems for students with cognitive disabilities that support behavior development.				
22.	I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities.				
23.	I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in my general education classroom.				
24.	I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.				
25.	Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

Open Ended Questions:
Explain what type of accommodations you think you will need to make for a student with cognitive disabilities to participate academically and socially in your first grade classroom.

Follow Up Survey:

Reflect on your responses from the first time you took the survey in July and now. Were your answers to the ability questions different?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.				
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
I learned new strategies to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

How has the implementation of the planning sessions impacted your ability to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to beliefs that I didn't ask about.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Special Education Teacher Efficacy **Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.**					
26.	I am able to assist in the creation of a general education classroom environment in which all students are accepted.				
27.	I am able to explain how to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities to a general education teacher.				
28.	I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
29.	I can adapt the materials used in the general education classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.				
30.	I can suggest questioning strategies to the general education teacher so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in general education classroom discussions.				
31.	I can assist in the implementation of behavior management systems for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom				
32.	I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
33.	I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in the general education classroom.				
34.	I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.				

35.	Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

Open Ended Questions:
Explain what type of accommodations you think you will need to make for a student with cognitive disabilities to participate academically and socially in your kindergarten classroom.

Follow Up Survey:

Reflect on your responses from the first time you took the survey in July and now. Were your answers to the ability questions different?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.				
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
I learned new strategies to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

How has the implementation of the planning sessions impacted your ability to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to beliefs that I didn't ask about.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Instructional Assistant Efficacy **Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.**					
36.	I am able to assist in the creation of a general education classroom environment in which all students are accepted.				
37.	I am able to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities while I am supporting the student in the general education classroom.				
38.	I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
39.	I can adapt the materials used in the general education classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.				
40.	I can suggest questioning strategies to the general education teacher so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in general education classroom discussions.				
41.	I can assist in the implementation of behavior management systems for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom				
42.	I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
43.	I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in the general education classroom.				
44.	I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.				

45.	Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

Open Ended Questions:

Explain what type of accommodations you think you will need to make for a student with cognitive disabilities to participate academically and socially in your kindergarten classroom.

Follow Up Survey:

Reflect on your responses from the first time you took the survey in July and now. Were your answers to the ability questions different?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Please select your level of agreement for each statement below.				
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				
I learned new strategies to support students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.				

How has the implementation of the planning sessions impacted your ability to include students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom?

Please use the space provided to tell me anything else related to beliefs that I didn't ask about.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. How did the monthly team meeting and the team collaboration process work for you? Give specific examples.
2. What were some advantages for this process?
3. What were some disadvantages?
4. What was the effect of these meeting on you as a teacher or IA?
5. Think about what you have learned as a result of this process. What would that have been?
6. If you were to continue with this process, what is something you would change?
7. What are some strategies that your team used to support the student in general education classes?
8. Give examples of how participating in this process has worked for the child behaviorally, socially, and academically.

Administrator Interview Questions

1. Discuss your understanding of the team collaboration process that your special education teachers, 2 kindergarten teachers, and special education IAs participated in?
2. How does this team collaboration process compare with previous efforts at collaboration?
3. What are some advantages of utilizing this process? If you were to continue with this process, what is something you would keep?
4. What are some disadvantages of utilizing this process? What would you change?
5. What is the role of the special ed teacher, general education teacher and IA when a child with cognitive disabilities is in your classroom?
6. What do you perceive as the team's expertise level in teaching/supporting students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom?
7. As an administrator, share some examples of the effect of the structured collaboration time and July training on the special education teachers, kindergarten teachers, and IAs.
8. Give examples of how having your team participate in this process has impacted the child(ren) behaviorally, socially, and academically.
9. Discuss the feasibility and supports needed to continue a team collaboration model for general education teachers, IAs and special education teachers.

APPENDIX G

INCLUSIVE SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Response Descriptive Statistics (Collaboration Construct)								
n =8	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Median	
Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **on a regular ongoing basis.**	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.63	3.25	4.00	3.00
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to plan for instruction of students with cognitive disabilities.**	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.13	2.88	3.00	3.00
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to adapt classroom materials for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom.**	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	2.88	3.50	3.00
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to develop and implement behavior supports used in the general education classroom.**	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.38	2.88	3.50	3.00
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to provide meaningful social interactions for the child with cognitive disabilities when in the general education classroom.**	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.13	3.13	3.00	3.00
I collaborate with members of the child's team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) **to use assistive technology to enable the student with disabilities to participate in daily lessons in the general education classroom.**	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.25	2.63	3.00	2.50
I bring my own expertise to the table when working with the child's team to support inclusion in the general education classroom.	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.38	3.13	3.00	3.00
I rely on the expertise of others when working with the child's team to support inclusion in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.38	3.13	3.00	3.00
(Post Test Only) Participating in this experience changed the level of collaboration among my team (general education teachers, special education teachers, and IAs)		2.00		4.00		3.38		3.50
(Post Test Only)I learned strategies to include students with cognitive disabilities.		3.00		4.00		3.38		3.00

Survey Response Descriptive Statistics (Belief Construct)								
n = 8	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Median	
Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I believe that students with cognitive disabilities should be taught in the general education classroom.	2.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.25	3.00	3.00
I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn social skills in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.63	3.50	4.00
I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn academics in the general education classroom.	2.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.13	3.00	3.00	3.00
I believe that students with cognitive disabilities learn age appropriate behavior in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.38	3.50	3.00	3.50
I believe that learning to complete tasks independently is important for students with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.63	3.63	4.00	4.00
Other team members hold similar beliefs about educating students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.25	3.13	3.00	3.00
I believe that collaborating with other professionals is necessary in order teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.88	3.88	4.00	4.00
(Post Test Only) Participating in this experience changed my beliefs about educating students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		2.00		3.00		2.50		2.50
(Post Test Only) I learned different ways of thinking about including students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		3.00		4.00		3.38		3.00

Survey Response Descriptive Statistics (General Education Efficacy Construct)								
n =2	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Median	
Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I am able to create a classroom environment in which all students are accepted.	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50
I am able to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities into my teaching.	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50
I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can adapt the materials used in the classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can adjust my questions so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in class discussions.	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50
I can establish classroom management systems for students with cognitive disabilities that support behavior development.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in my general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50
I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00
Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00
I learned new strategies to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00

Survey Response Descriptive Statistics (Special Education Efficacy Construct)								
n = 2	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Median	
Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I am able to assist in the creation of a general education classroom environment in which all students are accepted.	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00
I am able to explain how to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities to a general education teacher.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
I can adapt the materials used in the general education classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00
I can suggest questions strategies to the general education teacher so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in general education classroom discussions.	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00
I can assist in the implementation of behavior management systems for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00
(Post Survey Only) Participating in this experience changed my abilities to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00
(Post Survey Only) I learned new strategies to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00

Survey Response Descriptive Statistics (IA Efficacy Construct)								
n = 4	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Median	
Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I am able to assist in the creation of a general education classroom environment in which all students are accepted.	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
I am able to incorporate goals from IEPs of the students with cognitive disabilities while I am supporting the student in the general education classroom.	3.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.25	2.75	3.00	3.00
I can support the social integration of children with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.25	4.00	3.00
I can adapt the materials used in the general education classroom so that students with cognitive disabilities can meaningfully participate.	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
I can suggest questions strategies to the general education teacher so that students with cognitive disabilities can participate in general education classroom discussions.	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.50
I can assist in the implementation of behavior management systems for students with cognitive disabilities used in the general education classroom	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.50	3.50
I can implement strategies to promote independence for students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
I can explain why a child with cognitive disabilities is in the general education classroom.	2.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
I am able to foster a collaborative environment among the team (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) who work with a child with cognitive disabilities.	3.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.25	2.75	3.00	3.00
Other team members (e.g. general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants) have similar abilities to educate students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	4.00
Participating in this experience changed my abilities to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		2.00		3.00		2.50		2.50
I learned new strategies to teach students with cognitive disabilities in the general education classroom.		3.00		3.00		3.00		3.00