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Helping, Hurting, and Hoping in Inclusive Education: Exploring Teachers' Experiences on Inclusive Education in Alberta

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Helping, Hurting, and Hoping in Inclusive Education: Exploring Teachers' Experiences on

Inclusive Education in Alberta

by

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Abstract

Inclusive education classrooms serve over 100,000 students in Alberta who have disabilities (Alberta Education, 2021). From a Canadian context, limited information is known about factors that support and impede the implementation of inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Twelve teachers across Alberta with an average of 14 years of experience participated in this study. Using Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), many critical incidents were identified regarding what helps or hinders the implementation of inclusive education and factors teachers wish they had. Across all critical incidents and wish list factors, the notion of additional support from personnel was distinctive. From these critical incidents and wish list factors, four underlying assumptions emerged. Much like the literature, this study found that teachers had a diverse understanding of the meaning of inclusive education and what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like. Teacher's descriptions of parental involvement were viewed as transactional in inclusive education rather than a collaborative process like research suggests. The teachers also described the role of teacher training programs as insufficient in building their knowledge and described the additional sources they sought out in their teaching practice. Teachers emphasized the crucial role personnel play in implementing inclusive education, noting that without this support, inclusive education may not meet all students' needs. Notably, some aspects were missing from the interviews, including a lack of dialogue and general understanding about inclusive education pedagogy, promotion of general education strategies as inclusive education practices, and a lack of self-reflection of teaching practices. Together, this information suggests that providing additional support without at least minimal shifts to the education system and teaching practices may not benefit inclusive education; rather, it may perpetuate questionable teaching practices

that do not support the learning of students with exceptionalities. Implications of this study are

discussed in the context of educational shifts, which add to the current system of inclusive

education and educational restructuring, which suggests a fundamental change to the current

education system in Alberta. Considerations of study strengths, limitations, and

recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, H. Craig. The interviews reported in Chapters 2-4 were covered by Ethics Certificate number REB18-1741, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project "Exploring Inclusive Education using ECIT" on February 10, 2020.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Rationale

Historically, students with exceptionalities were excluded from being educated with their typically developing counterparts or from education as a whole (Andrews & Lupart, 2000). Since the 1800s, these students have slowly gained more representation in what has been referred to as "regular education," which is the educational experience of typically developing children (Andrews et al., 2015; Erten & Savage, 2012). Since the 1980s, there has been a movement towards inclusive schools in Canada, proposing that students of all abilities be taught within the general education classroom with their same-age peers (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Erten & Savage, 2012; Sokal & Katz, 2015; Towle, 2015). The movement towards inclusion has intensified and added additional complexities to teachers' roles due to increased responsibility, more diverse roles, and a more diverse student population (Carrington et al., 2016; Forlin, 2001).

While a common term, inclusion has been conceptualized, defined, measured, and overall studied in many different ways (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). The lack of consistency has implications for research findings and practice and has contributed to multiple methodological concerns within inclusive education research (Erten & Savage, 2012; Farrell et al., 2007; Limbach-Reich, 2015; Nind et al., 2004). Specifically, six methodological concerns are rampant in the inclusive education literature: (1) inconsistencies in defining and measuring inclusive education, (2) inconsistencies in measuring outcomes and the effectiveness of these practices, (3) inconsistencies with sample selection, (4) inconsistencies with sample characteristics, (5) lack of randomized controlled trials, and (6) lack of transparency in research concerning methodologies (Erten & Savage, 2012; Farrell et al., 2007; Limbach-Reich, 2015; Lindsay, 2007; Nind et al., 2004). Despite these concerns contributing to the lack of clarity, inclusive education is the dominant education ideology currently being implemented across Alberta.

Problem Statement

Although the adoption of inclusive education is a provincial and territorial decision, teachers are responsible for its day-to-day implementation (Anderson et al., 2007). Notably, not only have teachers historically felt inadequate in teaching an inclusive classroom (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), but there have also been inconsistencies in the literature on the effectiveness of inclusive education in meeting the needs of students with disabilities (Lindsay, 2007). Despite these challenges, Alberta adopted an inclusive education model in 2007 after a review of funding for severe disabilities revealed significant inconsistencies in how these students were supported (Williamson & Gilham, 2017). As of the 2018/2019 school year, inclusive classrooms supported all students in public education and served over 110,000 students in Alberta who had recognized disabilities from early childhood services to grade 12 (Alberta Education, 2021). In the past, students with recognized disabilities have primarily been educated through special education services (Alberta Education, 2009). Despite the shift in focus from special to inclusive education, it is unclear how teachers have shifted their practices to support students with diverse needs. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to examine how teachers teach a diverse group of students in inclusive classrooms to ensure both teachers and students are well supported.

Implementation of Inclusive Education

In Canada, education is regulated at the provincial and territorial level; this differs from other countries, such as the United States, which have federal regulations for education (Sokal & Katz, 2015). At the time of this project, only two Canadian studies have explored the implementation of inclusive education, only one of which used an Alberta sample. These studies identified many practices that support the implementation of inclusion, such as collaboration among school staff and families, support from administration, the use of technology, shared

commitment among staff members, and overall acceptance of inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). However, there are still significant gaps in this area in the literature related to factors that impede inclusive education implementation. In addition, the available research exclusively explored successful practices by either whole schools (Lyons et al., 2016) or entire school boards (McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). The macro analysis of these studies provides the foundation upon which this study is situated, specifically examining how teachers implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Purpose of the Study & Research Questions

Nearly 15% of students in Alberta have a recognized disability (Alberta Education, 2021). While inclusive education has been implemented widely in Alberta, it is unclear whether it effectively meets the needs of students with disabilities (Lindsay, 2007). In addition, much of the research currently available on implementing inclusive education focuses on the experiences of expert teachers or teachers in schools or school districts that implement inclusive education well (Bešić et al., 2017, Lyons et al., 2016, McGhie-Richmond et al., 2012). The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers from areas across Alberta implement inclusion in their classrooms. This study intends to examine teachers' understanding of inclusive education from broader experiences than have been traditionally studied and to better understand the current state of inclusive education across Alberta. Four research questions will be addressed:

1. How do teachers define and describe inclusive education?
2. What factors support teachers in implementing inclusive education?
3. What factors detract from teachers implementing inclusive education?
4. What, if any, factors warrant further investigation in supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education?

Definition of Terms

In education, children with exceptionalities are referred to in many different ways, such as students with special needs (e.g., Forlin, 2010), students with special educational needs (SEN; Bešić et al., 2016) or special education needs and disabilities (SEND; Hornby, 2015), and students with disabilities (e.g., Lyons et al., 2016). Other researchers use terms interchangeably (e.g., McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). The commonality between these terms is the use of person-first language. To ensure consistency in terminology, groups of students who require additional support in schools will be referred to as "students with exceptionalities." This term is more inclusive, as it also refers to students who are gifted and twice-exceptional. This term was chosen over the others in line with Andrews and colleagues (2015), who assert that it has a more positive connotation, supports a strength-based mindset, and supports a broader conceptualization of students (i.e., beyond students who have been diagnosed with a disability and/or disorder). The only exception to the use of this terminology is about the historical development of inclusive education, for which it is more appropriate to use the term "students with disabilities" to be consistent with the terminology used at the time.

Organization of this Document

This document begins with a review of relevant literature on inclusive education, focusing on the implementation of inclusive education. This chapter begins with a historical overview of the education system's progression towards inclusive education and a review of inclusive education definitions. Next, I will discuss the arguments in the literature surrounding the continuum of education systems and provide a brief review of the research on the effectiveness of inclusive education and the methodological concerns with the studies that have explored inclusive education. I will then provide an overview of the potential new movement

towards inclusive special education, a review of research on other key stakeholders in inclusive education, and the implications for the current study. After the definitions of inclusive education and methodological concerns in this area of research, I provide an overview of research on the implementation of inclusive education from a lens similar to the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) methodology selected for this study by identifying potential helping, hindering, and wish list factors in other research articles. In chapter three, I discuss ECIT in more detail and outline the steps taken to support my inquiry into teachers' implementation of inclusive education. In chapter four, I discuss the results of my inquiry, and in chapter five, I discuss this current study in the context of the research described in chapter two.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on inclusive education, including its history and development in Canada, definitions of inclusive education, and a discussion regarding the continuum of services in its education system. I will then briefly review research on inclusive education's effectiveness and methodological considerations in completing inclusive education research. Next, I review other stakeholders' inclusive education perspectives and a new movement towards inclusive special education. The chapter then shifts into focusing on this research project's topic, the implementation of inclusive education. I will summarize and critique the relevant literature with a focus on three areas from an ECIT lens: (1) factors that help the implementation of inclusive education, (2) factors that hinder the implementation, and (3) factors that could improve implementation.

Inclusion is used and conceptualized in many different ways, in part, due to differing foundational perspectives surrounding the concept of inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006). Although it covers many differences between people, such as race, culture, gender, and sexual identity, I explore inclusion in the context of education and ability, specifically with individuals with different cognitive, academic, social, emotional, and behavioural abilities (Sokal & Katz, 2015; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). To understand the various definitions of inclusive education, it is essential to consider the historical sequence of events that led to the concept. The term "students with exceptionalities" will primarily be used; however, the term "disabilities" will be used in this section to reflect the conceptualization of these students throughout history.

History of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has grown and evolved from shifts and progressions of several global social and political factors, including industrialization, the passage of laws and legislature, and

the advocacy for individuals with disabilities. Andrews and Lupart (2000) outline seven stages from the exclusion of individuals with disabilities to inclusion. The following summary of the history of inclusive education is specific to Canada; however, there are parallels to other countries. It is important to highlight that much of the history of inclusive education has primarily focused on students with severe and typically visible and/or physical disabilities or disabilities that cause immediate functional impairment (e.g., blindness or deafness). Students with mild or moderate exceptionalities have not been well researched or well represented in this history. This is because most of these students were educated in the traditional classroom and often were not identified or provided with additional support. Students mentioned in this section should be conceptualized as students with severe exceptionalities unless otherwise specified.

Exclusion

Before the 1800s, formal education was exclusively for the wealthy and most privileged (Blankenship & Lilly, 1981). Most children were not educated at this time, but students with any disability were excluded from the education system as a whole, regardless of their familial wealth (Limback-Reich, 2015). Individuals with disabilities were rarely viewed favourably by society, either viewed as too vulnerable to be included or viewed negatively and overall rejected by society (Andrews et al., 2015; Erten & Savage, 2012). It was primarily religious groups and physicians who cared for individuals with exceptionalities, and thus education for these children was of low priority (Andrews & Lupart, 2000).

Institutionalization

The phase of institutionalization occurred in the 1800s. During that time, individuals with disabilities were typically cared for in residential environments or institutions, and as a result, residential institutions were one of the first locations these children received any form of

education (Andrews & Lupart, 2000). However, this did not mean that all individuals with disabilities received an education; rather, education was reserved primarily for children with sensory defects (e.g., blind and deaf; Andrews & Lupart, 2000). Apart from sensory institutions, other general institutions became human warehouses for children with intellectual deficits, physical impairments, and behavioural issues (Winzer, 1990). It was not until near the 19th century, due to the outcry for better treatment of individuals with disabilities, that some of these institutions shifted to become "reformatories and trade schools" with a focus on practical skills for farming (Andrews & Lupart, 2000, p. 31; MacIntyre, 1984).

Segregation

In the 1900s, the movement towards mandatory publicly funded education developed out of educational reformers' efforts and an increased number of immigrants in Canada (Andrews & Lupart, 2000). With this movement came an influx of lower- and middle-class children who had never received formalized education, yet students with disabilities were not welcome in these schools (Winzer, 1990). Although education was mandatory for children ages seven to fifteen, as of 1918, students with disabilities were excluded from this mandate (Oreopoulos, 2005). By the mid-1920s, education became a possibility for children with disabilities living in urban areas; however, they did not receive the same education as other children in their communities (Winzer, 1990). At this time, segregation, the separation of select students from others, developed (Lutfiyya & Van Walleghem, 2001). Some urban schools ran special classes for students with disabilities; however, these classes were often part of a separate education system (Limbach-Reich, 2015). Although special classes existed, most children with severe mental or physical disabilities continued to be educated, if at all, in residential institutions, and creating these special classes further perpetuated the segregation of this population (Winzer, 1990).

In Alberta, education for, or more commonly, just the care of students with exceptionalities was the family's responsibility until the early 1920s (Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA], 2014). In 1923, the first school for students with exceptionalities opened and remained the only school of its kind in the province for another 30 years (ATA, 2014). The school, named the Provincial Training School (later renamed to the Michener Center), was a residential program exclusively for children with developmental disabilities (ATA, 2014). The school began with just over 100 children but grew significantly in size over the next 50 years to a population of over 2,300 children (Malacrida, 2015). While the school's initial intent was to provide education and training to support community return, less than 20% of the children received formal education (Malacrida, 2015). Although additional schools and programs were established, a report from 1960 identified that Alberta Education was not meeting this population's needs due to long waiting lists, insufficient space, limited training facilities, and the burden of finances (ATA, 2014). This led to the creation of parent advocacy groups to fight for better education for students with exceptionalities (ATA, 2014). Specifically, these groups were unhappy with the level of segregation for students with exceptionalities and felt that school districts did not accept responsibility to teach them (ATA, 2002a).

Categorization

Advocacy from parent interest groups led to creating special education classes across Canada in the following decades (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Conn-Blowers & McLeod, 1989). These groups advocated for personalized and educationally relevant experiences for individuals with disabilities (Conn-Blowers & McLeod, 1989). In the 1950s and 1960s, due to the discontent of special education being a "dumping ground," there was a push for appropriate categorization of individuals with disabilities into different classroom placements or programs based on

diagnostic category (Andrews & Lupart, 2000, p. 34; Corbett & Slee, 2000). This new initiative

led to the Special Education Approach, which used objective assessment criteria and

documentation (Andrews & Lupart, 2000). This approach consisted of five steps, including

referral of students, testing, labelling, placement, and making programming decisions and

continues to be prominent in school systems across Canada today (Andrews & Lupart, 2000).

Integration/Mainstreaming

By the 1970s, individuals with disabilities were educated in segregated classrooms but

were now often housed in public schools (Andrews & Lupart, 2000). The notion of the "least

restrictive environment" was developed in North America during this time (Robichaud & Enns,

1980). Originating from the United States Legislation Education of all Handicapped Children

Act (1975), the least restrictive environment refers to the most similar environment to the typical

classroom that would support a student's school achievement and social adjustment. Several

influential Canadian documents were also published at this time, following a similar trajectory to

American legislation (Towle, 2015). The Canadian Commission on Emotional Learning

Disorders in Children (CELDIC, 1970) report, in particular, emphasized the role of schools in

preventing and supporting students with exceptionalities and strongly recommended against

segregation of these students.

Major pivotal concepts came from the CELDIC report and other documents, including

the notion that all children have a right to an education that will help them realize their full

potential, that educational authorities have financial responsibilities for all children, and that

individuals with exceptionalities should be educated with their same age-peers for as long as

possible (CELDIC, 1970; Towle, 2015). These documents collectively lead to integrating

children with disabilities into traditional classrooms (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Erten & Savage,

2012). Integration referred to students with disabilities, often mild to moderate in severity, would be in the regular classroom for at least a portion of their educational programming (Towle, 2015). As such, revisions were also made across the country to teacher-training programs, such as courses on student learning needs and special education, to support the understanding of individuals with disabilities (Andrews & Lupart, 2000).

In 1985, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms added the provision to include people with physical and mental disabilities (Government of Canada, 1985). In doing so, Canada became the first country in the world to recognize this populations' rights (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Although the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicated that persons with disabilities had the right to equal protection and benefit and could not be discriminated against, education changes were not uniform, lending doubt to them having equal protection in education (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Alberta implemented the School Act by 1988, which attempted to attend to each individuals' equal protection (ATA, 2014). Although the School Act indicated that students should have access to education, it also allowed students to be excused from the regular classroom if that context was not productive or was detrimental to their success (ATA, 2014).

Inclusion

In 1991, an action plan was released by Alberta Education that would ultimately lead to a more formalized integration of students with exceptionalities (ATA, 2014). Two years later, Alberta Education created a new policy that required the regular classroom to be the first placement option for students and that placement decisions would be discussed with parents/guardians, students, and school staff (ATA, 2014). This meant that students with exceptionalities would first be considered in their community schools with their same-age peers before considering other options, such as specialized programs (ATA, 2014). The same year,

plans were announced that education would receive a 20 percent financial cut, which would ultimately impact this policy's implementation (ATA, 2014). Further, the cuts to education led to the contracting of services, larger class sizes, and poorer classroom conditions (ATA, 2002b).

In 2002, teachers went on a legal strike to protest these changes to education funding, which prompted a comprehensive review of Alberta's education system (ATA, 2002b, 2014). In 2003, Alberta's Commission on Learning released this comprehensive review results, which included 95 recommendations for a fiscally responsible education model (Teghtmeyer, 2013). The document, *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*, included eight recommendations regarding students with exceptionalities under their section on *Success for Every Child* (ATA, 2014). The recommendations pertained to adequate supports for students and teachers when integrated into regular classrooms, appropriate preparation and professional development for teachers and teaching assistants, early access to assessment and intervention, appropriate funding, and opportunities to support students' with exceptionalities continuation into post-secondary or the workforce (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003). Anecdotal reports suggest that the recommendations were questionably implemented, despite the government's expressed support (ATA, 2014; Teghtmeyer, 2013).

A few years later, the Minister of Education, Dave Hancock, announced a review of funding for severe disabilities (as classified based on Alberta Education coding), released in 2009 (ATA, 2014). This review uncovered "province-wide inconsistencies in the ways that students with disabilities are coded, assessed, and provided the required supports and services; the way policy is being interpreted and the ways in which students' administrative files are managed" (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 3). As a result of these inconsistencies, Alberta Education appointed a steering committee and initiative called "Setting the Direction" (Alberta

Education, 2009). This committee consulted with Alberta citizens to determine the future of special education (Alberta Education, 2009). The initiative made several recommendations relating to changes to the curriculum, capacity, and collaboration (Alberta Education, 2009). Following the Setting the Direction initiative, Alberta Education took steps to implement the initiative's recommendations, at which time the name shifted to "Action on Inclusion" in 2010 (ATA, 2014; Gilham & Williamson, 2013). While the Setting the Direction initiative and Action on Inclusion were major undertakings, the initiatives and subsequent recommendations were terminated in 2012 (Gilham & Williamson, 2013). Although the initiative sought to make significant changes to move special education in Alberta to inclusive education through their 12 strategic directives proposed by the Ministry of Education, few lasting changes were made (ATA, 2014; Williamson & Gilham, 2017). Of the recommendations, many were not implemented, or the implementation had been superficial (ATA, 2014). The only recommendation that was implemented was a shift to the funding structure from providing only students with identified disabilities funding (often referred to as a "diagnosis for dollars" approach) to providing inclusive education funding to students attending publicly funded schools (Williamson & Gilham, 2017).

In 2013, the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly formed a Blue Ribbon Panel due to concerns about inclusion in Alberta schools (ATA, 2014). Specifically, teachers were concerned about students with disabilities being adequately supported, as there were limited changes at the classroom level to support these students, and some teachers experienced support being reduced (ATA, 2014). The panel reviewed the implementation of the Setting the Direction Framework and sought to "recommend action to ensure inclusion occurs in contexts that are consistent with Association policies on the education of students with special needs," and to report their findings

to the Provincial Executive Council (ATA, 2014, p. 3). From their report, which involved

collecting the experiences of Albertan teachers and administrators, the panel found seven

elements surrounding the successful implementation of inclusive education, including "(1)

shared vision, (2) leadership, (3) research and evidence, (4) resources, (5) teacher professional

growth, (6) time and (7) community engagement" (ATA, 2014, p. 21). The panel used these

elements to establish their 38 recommendations, all of which explicitly named the jurisdiction for

which it applied (e.g., Alberta Education, Government of Alberta, School Jurisdictions, etc.;

ATA, 2014). Currently, it is unclear how well these recommendations have been adopted.

Types of Inclusive Education Definitions

Within the literature, there are various definitions of inclusive education. In part, this is

due to differing perspectives and concepts in thinking of inclusive education (Ainscow et al.,

2006). Overall, there is a consensus that inclusive education refers to students with varying

abilities being educated in the typical classroom with their same-age peers (Andrews & Lupart,

2000; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Göransson and Nilholm (2014) completed a review of

current research on inclusive education, which identified four categories of inclusive education

definitions: placement definitions, specified individualized definition, general individualized

definition, and community definition (p. 268).

Placement Definitions

According to Göransson and Nilholm (2014), the broadest definition is the placement

definition of inclusive education. This definition focuses on students with exceptionalities

placement into regular education classrooms with their same-age peers. Although this definition

is not as common as the other types of definitions, it has been used in studies examining

inclusion outcomes (Idol, 2006; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). The draw to this type of inclusion could

lie in its simplicity. Specifically, researchers consider a classroom as inclusive based solely on whether students with exceptionalities are physically in the regular classroom for any part of the day (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). This is a straightforward and objective way to define inclusion; however, many researchers find this definition does not sufficiently describe inclusive education. Students in the classroom is necessary but does not equate to being included. In addition, differences exist in terms of the percentage of time students spend in the classroom or whether certain groups of students with exceptionalities are excluded (e.g., students with severe behavioural concerns; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). While this definition is amongst the most straightforward way to qualify a classroom as inclusive, outcome measures using this definition tend to be more diverse and have less consistency, making this type of definition very problematic to use in research (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009).

Specified Individualized Definition

Definitions under this category from Göransson and Nilholm (2014) focus on meeting students with exceptionalities' social and academic needs but emphasize that placement is required but alone is not sufficient. Critics of this definition have noted that rather than separate classrooms, this definition envisions the same services be provided in classrooms with their same-age peers. Additionally, there are concerns regarding how student needs will be met as there is general ambiguity surrounding what this looks like in practice. Finally, it is unclear how it will be apparent when student needs are met based on how goals are set. For example, success can be interpreted differently depending on whether it is defined as meeting general education goals or individualized goals.

General Individualized Definition

This definition focuses on meeting all students' needs in a single inclusive classroom

(Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). This definition does not focus on just exceptional students but instead focuses on students with and without exceptionalities to improve education for all (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). The notion of educating "all" students originates from the "Education for All" movement that began in the 1990s (Ainscow et al., 2006). This movement's original motive was to increase access to education for particular groups (e.g., girls); however, advocates for students with exceptionalities quickly began emphasizing the same principles using the same name (Ainscow et al., 2006). Similar concerns to the previously mentioned category arise in knowing what needs are to be met and how successfully meeting those needs are measured (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014).

This definition also removes the focus from students with exceptionalities. Kauffman and Hornby (2020) have drawn parallels between the notion that all student needs should be met in the inclusive classroom to making statements that "all lives matter" concerning the Black Lives Matter movement. Specifically, the authors mentioned that in both cases, the emphasis of the movement should be on those who need additional focus and that "if people are not identified and given labels, they are likely to be ignored" (p. 258). They stated that when the focus is taken away from students with exceptionalities, specialized programs and services designed for these students are often no longer available, and thus these groups only have access to programs developed for typically developing students. This is problematic when research suggests that programs designed for general education students do not necessarily support students with exceptionalities learning, which is why these students have Individualized Education or Program Plans (IEPs or IPPs; Wilcox, 2020; Zigmond & Kloo, 2011).

Community Definition

The final definition focuses on the inclusive classroom as a community instead of a group

of individuals (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). Specifically, this definition considers the social elements of inclusion, including valuing diversity and making everyone feel welcome, as well as providing equity and care (Naraian, 2011), and has is referred to as social inclusion in the research (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013; Hornby, 2015; Robo, 2011). There are no arguments that students with exceptionalities should be socially excluded; however, researchers' focus is that social inclusion should not outweigh the importance of ensuring students with exceptionalities receive an appropriate education that meets their needs (Hornby, 2015). Similarly, research on students with exceptionalities social-emotional functioning in inclusive settings has been inconclusive (Ruijs & Peetsman, 2009).

Continuum of Services: Points of Contention among Researchers

As the movement towards inclusive education progressed, many researchers contended that the notion of relying solely on one unified system, as opposed to two separate systems of special and regular education, was the best approach (Lupart, 1998). It is important to note that while researchers disagree about the specifics regarding inclusive education, very few contend that inclusion should not exist (Erten & Savage, 2012). Instead, the disagreement is whether inclusion alone can genuinely be the most appropriate setting to meet the needs of all students with exceptionalities (Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989).

Some researchers believe in full and unequivocal inclusion and eliminating segregated services under the premise that inclusion is a moral and ethical matter (Lupart, 1998). Many advocates of full inclusion want radical and immediate change to eliminate special education, focusing on the ethical, moral, and legal rights of individuals with exceptionalities to have similar educational opportunities and experiences as their typically developing peers (Lupart, 1998). This group also believed that sorting and categorizing students' disabilities was

stigmatizing and further perpetuated discrimination and segregation between students (Erten & Savage, 2012). The proponents of full inclusion believe inclusive education is characterized by the notion that all students should belong and learn together in their regular classroom schools, irrespective of individual differences, and with no exceptions (Erten & Savage, 2012).

While there is an ethical component of inclusive education, researchers contend that there are other factors to consider in implementing inclusive education (Hornby, 2015; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989). Kauffman and Hornby (2020) have acknowledged the ease and simplicity that unequivocal inclusive education based on ethical and moral factors provides. The hard and fast rules of unequivocal inclusion allow for easier and ultimately quicker promotion and dissemination of policy, which is beneficial as the issue would be rectified quickly when posed as a moral or human rights issue.

Additionally, the challenge of focusing on inclusion exclusively as a moral issue does not lend itself to critique, as any critique could be interpreted as denying students with exceptionalities' human rights (Armstrong et al., 2011; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020). There are certain aspects of inclusive education that nearly all people would agree to, such as that schools should be welcoming and safe to all students of all abilities (Armstrong et al., 2011; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020). These sentiments do not necessarily transfer to inclusive education practices. Hornby (2015) contends that while it may be the right of children to be educated with their same-age peers, it may not be the right or best option for them. The argument about rights also fails to acknowledge students with exceptionalities' rights to receive an education that is appropriate to their needs (Hornby, 2015). In fact, within the literature, there is a problem in defining what inclusive education is, described in more detail below (Ainscow et al., 2006). Armstrong and colleagues (2011) further state that "in many cases inclusion has been reduced mainly to a

change of language rather than of practice, and the more the language of inclusion is used in practice the more evasive it becomes" (p. 37).

This group of researchers believe the concept of inclusive education should be approached from an empirical perspective, analyzing the effectiveness and overall success both at a system and an individual level (Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989). These researchers suggest that, in many ways, inclusive education may not consistently meet the needs of students (Erten & Savage, 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Wilcox, 2020). Specifically, researchers suggest that general education teachers are not prepared to teach diverse groups of students due to large class sizes, lack of specialized training in teaching students with exceptionalities, and inadequate availability to provide intensive support (Kavale & Forness, 2000; McCrimmon, 2015; Zigmond & Kloo, 2011).

Additionally, special education should not be entirely abolished as it supports students with exceptionalities through appropriate identification and intervention that is questionably implemented in an inclusive education environment (Erten & Savage, 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Zigmond & Kloo, 2011). Zigmond and Kloo (2011) have highlighted the benefits of a continuum of multiple systems. Specifically, they mention that special education systems are designed to provide individualized support for students with exceptionalities, while general education systems are designed to teach groups of students with relatively homogenous skills. These researchers believe inclusion should focus on the child's needs (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Therefore, these researchers are not inherently opposed to inclusion; instead, they seek to understand the effectiveness of inclusive practices in supporting students, especially those with exceptionalities and suggest that a more flexible approach to inclusive practices is warranted (Erten & Savage, 2012). Notably, these researchers

draw on inconclusive or limitedly supportive evidence of inclusive education to form their

rationale for this perspective and support a continuum of both special and inclusive education

systems to meet student needs (Erten & Savage, 2012; Wilcox, 2020).

Alberta's Definition and Implementation of Inclusive Education

In terms of their perspective on inclusive education, Alberta Education (2020b)

emphasizes "flexible and responsive learning environments that can adapt to the changing needs

of learners" (p. 1). Specifically, they discuss a range of learning environments from specialized

classrooms and one-on-one instruction to the use of flexible and responsive supports in a

classroom with their same grade-level peers. This definition aligns with the specified

individualized definition of inclusion as the focus is on supporting student needs through the

most inclusive environment. It is important to highlight that Alberta Education does not specify

the needs the environment will address; specifically, educational needs are not mentioned in their

current document. This is a common theme among perspectives and definitions of inclusive

education, and interpretations can range from objective definitions based on pre-set goals to

subjective definitions in which students are encouraged to develop at their own pace (Göransson

& Nilholm, 2014). The lack of transparency in what is meant by the "changing needs of learners"

creates ambiguity in the true focus of inclusive education (Alberta Education, 2020b, p. 1).

Explicitly, Alberta Education defines inclusive education as "a way of thinking and

acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all learners"

(Alberta Education, 2020b, p. 1); however, their webpage on inclusive education offers

information beyond the definition. Alberta Education (2020b) views inclusion not only as "an

attitude and approach" but that inclusive education also "embraces diversity and learner

differences and promotes equal opportunities for all learners in Alberta" (p. 1). Alberta

Education (2020b) also emphasizes that inclusion goes beyond students with special needs but focuses on "accepting responsibility for all children and students" (p. 1). Therefore, based on their explicit definition, Alberta Education aligns with a community definition, focusing on diversity, universal acceptance, belonging, and a general individualized definition, focusing on all students with and without exceptionalities.

Implicitly, Alberta Education aligns with definitions that focus on the needs of students with exceptionalities (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). Alberta Education (2020a) emphasizes a focus on all students yet promotes a document called *Standards for Special Education by Alberta Learning* (2004) that focuses on the education of students with exceptionalities. Although the explicit purpose of this document is to "help ensure the education system meets the needs of all learners and that all learners have access to high quality education" (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 1), even the title of the document suggests students with exceptionalities are educated differently than students without exceptionalities.

Despite their explicit acknowledgement of inclusive education, there is an overall lack of information surrounding the implementation of inclusive education in Alberta. While Alberta Education (2013) offers a document on their website titled Indicators of Inclusive Schools, which is intended to support the implementation of inclusive education, there is currently no standard regarding how to implement inclusive education. Thus, decisions about implementation are up to the school district's discretion, school, or, more commonly, the classroom teacher, which creates inconsistencies surrounding inclusive education implementation. This is problematic as one of the core reasons for moving towards an inclusive education system was to address the inconsistencies identified from the 2007 review of funding for severe disabilities. Further, there is limited information to determine the effectiveness of inclusive education in Alberta.

Moreover, Alberta Education notes that 15% of Alberta students have a recognized disability (Alberta Education, 2021). Considering estimates based on a longitudinal study from Ontario suggests 20-40% of school-age children have clinically diagnosable disorders, the number from Alberta Education is lower than would be anticipated for encompassing all students with exceptionalities (Boak et al., 2016). The incongruence between these numbers suggests that many students with disabilities may not be recognized in Alberta's public schools.

Overall, the inconsistencies between explicit and implicit definitions of inclusive education and a general lack of or contradictory information suggest that Alberta Education has adopted the inclusive education rhetoric without committing to an inclusive and supportive approach. Further, as mentioned in the history section, Alberta's seminal documents supporting the move to inclusive education were based on community consultation (ATA, 2014). While this consultation is important, it is also important to review the literature on inclusive education's effectiveness and any methodological concerns in its study. As this study also sought to consult teachers regarding inclusive education, a brief review of this literature is followed.

Research on the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education

When considering the appropriateness of inclusive education for all students with exceptionalities, it is important to examine inclusive education's effectiveness. Efficacy and effectiveness studies both seek to understand the differences of outcomes between at least two groups due to different interventions or services; however, they differ based on the groups' circumstances. Effectiveness focuses on studying circumstances that are as close to real-world environments as possible to understand the outcomes of interventions in realistic settings (Fritz & Cleland, 2003). In contrast, efficacy relies on highly controlled conditions to understand the impact of interventions under ideal conditions (Fritz & Cleland, 2003). Some of the literature

examining outcomes from inclusive education utilizes an effectiveness approach. In examining the research on inclusive education's effectiveness, social and academic outcomes are among the most consistently used measures (Lindsay, 2007). Overall, the research is mixed in terms of whether inclusive education provides positive, negative, or neutral outcomes to students with and without exceptionalities in inclusive education (Lindsay, 2007). The purpose of this short review is to provide context into the current state of research on inclusive education.

In the 1980s and 1990s, three meta-analyses were conducted on the effectiveness of inclusive placements that have generated effect sizes based on inclusive education's academic and social outcomes (Baker, 1994; Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Wang & Baker, 1986). In research, effect sizes range from -1 to +1, with a score of 0 reflecting no effect, while a score closer to 1 (positive or negative) reflects more confidence in there being differences between groups (e.g., those educated in inclusive versus non-inclusive classrooms). Researchers generally agree that a small effect size is 0.2, a medium effect size is 0.5, and a large effect size is 0.8 or higher (Cohen, 1988). The results from these meta-analyses did not provide clear evidence on the effectiveness of inclusive education. The meta effect sizes for academic improvements for students with exceptionalities ranged from 0.08 to 0.44, and for social improvements ranged from 0.11 to 0.28 (Baker, 1994; Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Wang & Baker, 1986). Although positive, the effect sizes were generally small, thereby not providing sufficient evidence to support inclusive education. Further, different methodologies were utilized among these reviews, which may have accounted for some of the disparity of effect sizes (Baker et al., 1994).

Recently, Lindsay (2007) found similar discrepancies between the research on the effectiveness of inclusive education. Specifically, this review found that although some studies found positive outcomes, many of these outcomes included caveats. For example, in Rafferty's

and colleagues' (2003) study on a pre-school population, the degree of severity of the students' disability interacted with the environment in that the type of setting did not impact children with low levels of disabilities, while students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms outperformed a similar group of severe students in a segregated classroom. Other studies from this review demonstrated neutral or negative effects (Lindsay, 2007). Among these studies, it is important to note that there were methodological concerns, including outcome measures, the range of ages used in their sample, and the lack of randomization of participants. Overall, it is unclear whether inclusive education effectively supports students with exceptionalities; however, it is also important to examine the studies' quality.

Methodological Concerns in Inclusive Education Research

Overall, there are inconsistent findings regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education, in part, due to methodological problems with research on this topic, which limit the overall confidence in these studies and understanding of this topic (Erten & Savage, 2012; Farrell et al., 2007; Limbach-Reich, 2015; Nind et al., 2004). Above all, concerns with and inconsistency of the definition of inclusive education permeate most of the methodological concerns in this research area, which subsequently leads to different ways of measuring how inclusive a classroom or school is (Nind et al., 2004). Other concerns include inconsistency in sample selection and characteristics, inconsistency in the use of outcomes measures, and the lack of randomized controlled trials (Erten & Savage, 2012; Limbach-Reich, 2015; Nind et al., 2004).

Inconsistencies of Research Studies

As previously mentioned, there is inconsistency in terminology concerning inclusive education research. Considering the inconsistency, researchers also need to consider how to measure the level of inclusion in their samples (Limbach-Reich, 2015). For example, some

researchers measure inclusion by the percentage of time a student is physically present in the general education classroom with their same-age peers to determine the degree of inclusion (Idol, 2006). In this definition, if students with exceptionalities spend 50% of their time in the regular classroom, the school is considered 50% inclusive.

Other researchers consider the percentage of students who spend some of their time in the general education classroom, focusing on students' physical placement (Limbach-Reich, 2015). In these studies, inclusion is measured based on how many students are included, even partly, in the regular classroom (Limbach-Reich, 2015); according to this definition, if all students spend any time in the regular classroom, the school is considered fully inclusive. Other researchers measure inclusion from social inclusion, examining student involvement in social activities within the school community or acceptance level in the school as determined by peer ratings (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Just as the definitions of inclusion differ, so do the ways researchers measure inclusion, making it challenging to understand inclusion due to inconsistencies.

Not only must researchers consider how they will measure inclusion, but they must also determine how successful inclusion is measured. Some researchers define successful inclusion simply by the proportion of students with exceptionalities within the mainstream classroom (Lindsay, 2003; 2007); as discussed, this can determine the school's inclusivity. This form of measurement is problematic as it considered successful inclusion only on students' physical inclusion in the classroom. It assumes higher inclusion rates; thus, more students in the classroom is more useful or better than lower rates, without identifying why this may be the case. Other researchers have focused on specific elements of success, including students' self-concept, peer acceptance, academic progress, and more (Lindsay, 2003; 2007). While these elements measure outcomes, it is important again to consider the definition of inclusion. If a study defines

inclusion in terms of acceptance and welcoming environments, it is logical to measure students'

self-concept and peer acceptance; however, it is also important to remember that educational

institutions should also be providing academic information. Therefore, it is also important to

consider these educational factors. However, as described in Lindsay's (2007) review, not all

studies consider multiple variables, nor do they consider academics.

Identifying appropriate samples has been noted as a methodological issue in inclusive

education research (Nind et al., 2004). Studies examine different groups, including teachers,

parents, students (with and without exceptionalities), other key stakeholders, or often a

combination of different groups. Overall, there is no consensus on how to derive a sample to

examine the concept of inclusion. Some researchers obtain their sample using a pre-determined

set of criteria to include and exclude from their samples (e.g., only including schools with all

students in regular classrooms; Nind et al., 2004). Other researchers preselect samples of schools

or school boards that they deem are inclusive based on pre-existing relationships they have with

these schools and school boards, which adds the complexity of potential bias (Nind et al., 2004).

Further, other researchers allow school personnel to self-identify as inclusive or select

schools and school boards based on the level of inclusivity judged through policy documents

(Nind et al., 2004). In addition to identifying the sample, researchers must also decide whether

they will examine "good" or "everyday practice" (Nind et al., 2004). Good practice would

examine the perspective of successful schools and practices (and subsequently defining it), while

everyday practice would examine inclusive education as it is, regardless of whether they are

considered to be good practice (Nind et al., 2004). Lastly, some researchers are not transparent in

their decision-making process, creating more challenges in comparing and analyzing the

research. Overall, while each of these sample selection strategies have strengths and limitations,

the largest limitation is that there is such inconsistency across studies, making it challenging to compare them for a holistic view of research on the effectiveness of inclusive education.

While inclusion involves accepting and educating students with a range of challenges, some studies have focused solely on one group of students (i.e., students with learning disabilities, Down Syndrome) and often overlook twice-exceptional students (e.g., students who are gifted with learning disabilities; Limbach-Reich, 2015). In contrast, others have focused on the severity of needs, either more narrowly focusing on only severe needs or more broadly on all students with challenges ranging from mild to severe (Limbach-Reich, 2015; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). Further, some studies focus exclusively on individuals with exceptionalities, while others examine both students with and without disabilities (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). Researchers argue the overall diversity in inclusive education research limits these studies' generalizability, as the population is either too specific (e.g., one group of disabilities) or too broad to determine the overall effectiveness (Nind et al., 2004; Limbach-Reich, 2014). Therefore, it is challenging to determine inclusive education's effectiveness as the samples themselves vary so drastically. Some researchers consider inclusive education to be a contextual concept, from which generalizability is not feasible or reliable (Erten & Savage, 2012).

Lack of Randomized Controlled Trials

Randomized controlled trials are regarded as one of the most robust ways to measure treatments' effectiveness (Nind et al., 2004). A randomized control trial involves comparing groups randomly assigned to either an intervention or a control group (e.g., an inclusive and non-inclusive classroom) and monitoring their outcomes over time to determine an intervention's effectiveness (i.e., inclusion; Gamble et al., 2015). While they are popular in medicine, in education, randomized controlled trials are seldom conducted (Erten & Savage, 2012; Lindsay,

2007). A review of the literature by Seethaler and Fuchs (2005) found that only 4% of reviewed studies used this design. This may be due to logistical and financial challenges in having multiple classrooms with groups equivalent to all participant factors. While some researchers argue that RCTs are not feasible due to lack of isolation and control of all variables (Connolly et al., 2018), other researchers argue that without randomized controlled trials, inclusive education's effectiveness compared to other models will remain unclear (Limbach-Reich, 2015). Without these trials, meta-analyses are the next best way to review the breadth of research done on inclusive education effectiveness compared to other types of education. Unfortunately, there are very few studies that compare different educational settings. In fact, in a review of over 1,300 articles from 2001 to 2005 on the effectiveness of inclusive education, Lindsay (2007) identified 14 studies that compared inclusive education's effectiveness based on student outcomes of children with exceptional needs. Many of the other studies were non-comparative, in that they did not make comparisons between children with exceptional needs and those without exceptional needs. They also utilized qualitative methodologies that relied on perceptions of effectiveness or conducted non-experimental case studies. Even among comparative studies, the outcome measures were variable, and the results were inconsistent.

It is important to consider the impact of methodological concerns when conducting inclusive education research. First, it is vital to consider the definition of inclusive education as it impacts other methodological factors, including the measurement of inclusion, the selection of outcome measures, the selection of a sample, and the characteristics of the sample itself. When considering inclusive education's effectiveness, it is also important to consider how success or effectiveness is defined and measured and the selected sample's characteristics. Finally, although randomized controlled trials and/or meta-analyses help determine treatments' effectiveness, few

trials exist, and comparative studies in a meta-analysis differed significantly in their outcome measures. Overall, there are justifiable reasons to question and scrutinize the research available on inclusive education effectiveness in considering these methodological concerns.

Inclusive Special Education Movement

Recently, "inclusive special education" had emerged as a new form of an education system (Hornby, 2015). Originating from Finland (Takala et al., 2009), the concept of inclusive special education, proposed by Hornby (2015), integrates theory and research behind special education and inclusive education practices to support students with exceptionalities. Hornby (2015) identified that inclusive special education focuses on ensuring students' with exceptionalities' needs can be met in the most inclusive setting, using effective instructional strategies, with the ultimate "goal of facilitating the highest level of inclusion in society post-school for all young people with [exceptionalities]" (p. 239). More specifically, this proposed system combines the moral and ethical considerations of inclusive education with special education intervention and supports (Hornby, 2015). While this practice is already underway in Finland with promising results (Takala et al., 2009), the concept of inclusive special education has not been actualized more broadly but may be the next movement in education.

Other Stakeholders in Inclusive Education

In addition to inclusive education's effectiveness, it is also important to consider stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of inclusive education. For example, parents' views have been limited in the inclusive education literature (Wilcox, 2020). Within the scant literature available, parents have expressed concerns about inclusive education meeting their children's needs in school and ensuring their children have skills necessary for adulthood (DeBoer et al., 2010). Additionally, teachers have expressed high levels of stress, leading to high burnout rates

and many leaving the profession entirely due to lack of preparedness and the added stress of inclusive classroom demands (Gray et al., 2017).

When analyzing students without exceptionalities' attitudes towards inclusive education, researchers have found that these peers generally have neutral feelings towards their peers with exceptionalities (DeBoer, 2012). While neutral feelings may appear to be better than negative feelings towards students with exceptionalities, the researchers argue that many of the scores consider both highly positive and highly negative ratings, noting the impact a few negative attitudes can have on students with exceptionalities (DeBoer, 2012). Researchers, such as Kocaj and colleagues (2018), have examined students with exceptionalities' perspectives, both in special education placement schools and in inclusive schools. They found that students report higher academic self-concepts when in special educational placements than inclusive placements. Further, the same study found that students with exceptionalities in inclusive classrooms over two years had a small but significant decrease in their motivation towards academics that was not found when students with exceptionalities were in special education placements. The researchers concluded that these differences are likely due to the social comparison of peers more similar to themselves in special education placements than typically developing peers in inclusive schools. Overall, the results from other stakeholders have pointed to some flaws in inclusive education's ideological implementation.

Implications for the Current Study

The complexity and inconsistency in inclusive education research create challenges in synthesizing the information and making concrete and accurate statements regarding inclusion's effectiveness (Limbach-Reich, 2015). Despite the concerns and the potential new movement towards inclusive special education, inclusive classrooms and schools exist in Alberta, and thus

it is vital to understand these systems in their current state so that we can improve them. Therefore, the current study aims to examine the implementation of inclusive education from teachers' perspective using an Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT).

Implementation of Inclusive Education Research

Criticisms have arisen from the inclusive education movement. First, it is important to discuss some of the methodological concerns described above. As summarized in Appendix A, most studies on the implementation of inclusive education have used a purposeful selection approach to identify their samples, in which participants are sought out directly by the researchers based on set criteria. It is also important to consider the way studies have defined inclusive education, as there are numerous differences in the conceptualization and definitions of inclusive education. When examining the literature on inclusive education, some factors mentioned in this review apply more broadly to education rather than specifically to inclusive education. Nonetheless, these factors were mentioned in context to inclusive education and are included in this review.

To date, there has not been a study that has looked at this topic from an ECIT perspective. Rather, researchers have often asked about factors that have supported teachers' implementation of inclusive education without understanding barriers or aspects that were missing but would have been helpful. This review summarizes the research on the implementation of inclusive education utilizing an ECIT framework. Specifically, this review summarizes the helping, hindering, and wish list factors described by other researchers.

Helping Factors

In ECIT, a helping factor is anything that supports the phenomenon being studied (Butterfield et al., 2009). Therefore, a helping factor is anything that teachers have identified as

supporting their implementation of inclusive education. The literature references a variety of factors that support the implementation of inclusive education, including (1) collaboration, (2) sufficient resources, (3) attitude and commitment to inclusion, (4) emphasizing belonging, (5) education policy, (6) funding structure, (7) specific teaching practices, and (8) training.

Collaboration. Schools that support inclusive education effectively support collaboration among staff to support students by gaining new and different perspectives and feedback (Lyons et al., 2016). Collaboration refers to members working together to support inclusive education and includes all staff, not just teachers. This includes paraprofessionals, special education staff, and building administration (Smith & Smith, 2000). Collaboration among school staff, families, students, communities, and other professionals has been considered important in implementing inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Through a team approach, parent and family involvement facilitates open communication and supports student success in inclusive environments (Lyons et al., 2016). Within the school, collaboration has been facilitated from multiple perspectives in both formal and informal ways. Some schools have established team structures or have implemented co-teaching classrooms, while other schools have fostered more of a supportive staff community that encourages teamwork (Bešić et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). Ely (2013) identified that teachers without established teams in their schools seek support for their wellbeing from others when teaching in inclusive environments. In addition to their co-workers, teachers also seek support from family, friends, medical professionals, and teaching organizations. This type of support helped teachers reduce their stress and recharge to better support their students.

Sufficient Resources. Sufficient resources have been noted as a critical factor in inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). The

availability of resources has implications for teachers' willingness to implement inclusive

education practices and their overall attitude towards inclusive education (Bešić et al., 2016). In

addition, the uncertainty concerning adequate resources due to budget restraints and cuts is the

biggest concern for the inclusion of students with emotional-behavioural or multiple disorders

(Bešić et al., 2016). The two types of resources most commonly referred to within the literature

were the provisions time and personnel, as opposed to tangible resources (e.g., technology).

Time. Time, including but not limited to time for lesson planning and adjustments, time

to secure supporting materials, and time for collaboration, supports inclusive education

(McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Smith & Smith, 2000). Teachers found having scheduled time

for these activities to be a significant contributor to their success in inclusive education (Lyons et

al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). One study found that time for collaboration and planning was

a foundational component of their inclusive education model and was facilitated by principals

hiring part-time teachers to provide supervision, scheduling release time for teachers, and using

professional development time for collaboration (Lyons et al., 2016).

Personnel. The availability and sufficient allocation of personnel were crucial to

implementing inclusive education. Teachers valued the contributions of support personnel such

as educational assistants, inclusion support teachers, specialists (e.g., psychologists, occupational

therapists, speech and language pathologists) and consultants (Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005;

Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). The use of personnel was valuable for consulting on

supporting students (Lyons et al., 2016). Support could be formal and structured, such as through

scheduled time to meet with support personnel or facilitated through informal means (e.g.,

emails; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). The most significant change from the

allocation of support in inclusive classrooms versus segregated classrooms was special education

educators' placement in the general classroom rather than in separate rooms (McLeskey et al., 2014). In addition, one study described the use of support personnel as "efficient but flexible," meaning the support resources were shared among several teachers but that they could be reallocated as necessary (McLeskey et al., 2014, p. 65). Rather than having flexible teaching schedules, one school implemented fixed teaching schedules (e.g., must teach certain subjects at certain times) and flexible scheduling of support personnel to ensure the scheduling of support personnel during core subjects (McLeskey et al., 2014). In Alberta, teachers generally feel there are not enough supports when teaching students with exceptionalities in an inclusive classroom and overall would like more support in all areas (Craig, 2016).

Material Resources. Teachers in two studies mentioned physical material resources supporting inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). In the study by McGhie-Richmond and colleagues (2013), teachers mentioned the benefit of technology such as SmartBoard to help keep their students engaged in an inclusive setting. In the study by Lyons and colleagues (2016), having material resources available was mentioned but not elaborated on.

Attitude and Commitment to Inclusion. Across studies, the staff's overall commitment to inclusion cannot be overlooked. Notably, all staff in two studies expressed a commitment to "make it work" through their dialogue and actions (Lyons et al., 2016, p. 897; McLeskey et al., 2014). Even when faced with challenges in their classrooms, teachers' perceived value in inclusive education did not diminish (Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). This differed from other studies that explored teachers' perceptions about inclusive education in which teachers explicitly stated commitment but would often put caveats on the types of students they would want in their classroom (e.g., docile students versus students with high behavioural challenges; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Although challenges in the classroom impacted

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teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, these attitudes tended to be based on a lack of resources, which hinders the overall implementation of inclusive education (McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Therefore, it was not necessarily inclusive education that teachers were frustrated with; instead, it was the inability to effectively implement inclusive education without the necessary resources (McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013).

A body of research has identified that a teacher's attitude towards inclusive education can promote or hinder inclusive education practices (Male, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014; Vaz et al., 2015). Specifically, attitudes regarding the engagement and acceptance of different needs are prominent in the literature (Forlin et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2009). One study suggested teachers' attitudes are the most significant factors influencing inclusive education and considered it a precursor to the implementation itself by general and special education teachers (Bešić et al., 2016). Specifically, teachers' initial positive outlook on inclusive education creates opportunities for further learning and has been found to influence the way teachers support students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms (Bešić et al., 2016; Glenn, 2007; Jordan et al., 2010).

Similar to having committed and passionate staff, teacher personality factors were also important in inclusive education. Considering schools are seeking passionate teachers, it is likely that teachers who are passionate about inclusive education are seeking out these environments, thereby creating a more homogenous group (Lyons et al., 2016). Other personality factors considered necessary in implementing inclusive education include a warm yet demanding approach to students (McLeskey et al., 2014). More specifically, these teachers are incredibly warm and supportive of students, but they also have high expectations for all students (McLeskey et al., 2014). This combination has been implicated in creating perceived successful inclusive environments that support and push students (McLeskey et al., 2014).

Despite inclusive education policies, decisions regarding the implementation and overall creation of inclusive education environments are ultimately at the school's discretion (Lyons et al., 2016). As participants in Lyons' and colleagues' (2016) study noted, it is important for inclusive schools to "seek out passionate people and support them and fire them up and make their passion and their visibility very evident and then that would become contagious" (p. 897). Lyons and colleagues (2016) found while individual teacher support and passion was important, this outlook required a whole-school effort and an overall commitment to inclusive education. Often, this passion stems from the administrative leadership in the school: the principal. Many studies have discussed the crucial role principals play in inclusive education, including demonstrating and fostering a commitment to inclusive education, freeing up time for staff to collaborate, advocating for and providing professional development opportunities that are relevant and useful, and overall providing support to teachers (Idol, 2006; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014; Wlodarczyk et al., 2015). Further, teachers emphasized the importance of administration being aware of classroom challenges in implementing inclusive education (Smith & Smith, 2000). Teachers emphasized that the administration should attend similar professional development opportunities to facilitate continuity between teachers and administrators and ensure that principals understand teachers' perspectives (Smith & Smith, 2000).

A final factor related to teachers' attitudes and commitment to inclusive education is teachers' overall commitment to students (Lyons et al., 2016). Teachers emphasize prioritizing student needs first, such as prioritizing student interactions over paperwork (Lyons et al., 2016). In addition, teachers noted the importance of creating supportive teacher-student relationships, which helped foster belonging and reinforced that students were important and valued in the classroom (Lyons et al., 2016).

Emphasizing Belonging. Lyons and colleagues (2016) also discussed the value of belonging from multiple perspectives. For example, educators frequently commented on the importance of interactions with staff and students and the importance of friendships for students with and without exceptionalities. Similarly, parents commented on the significance of students' belonging, expressed through the elation experienced when their child is invited to birthday parties. Elementary students had similar comments, noting that their friends were the most significant component they liked about their school. Within the classroom, elementary teachers reported anecdotally that elementary students interact with each other irrespective of their differences and that teachers and students alike play a role in developing welcoming environments. Overall, student belonging was considered important for student success, and these relationships extended beyond the classroom. Principals emphasized the need for parents to be aware of the school's inclusiveness, and parents emphasized the importance of a sense of community within the school, feeling like all personnel have the same information and are consistent. Therefore, belonging was not only for students within the classroom but also extended to students and their families within the school's entire context. This notion is well aligned with the community definition of inclusion (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014).

Education Policy. Research has suggested a well-articulated inclusive education policy supports inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). In Canada, education is regulated at the provincial and territorial levels (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Due to this structure, there is no cohesive way for inclusive education to be practiced across the country, leading to significant implementation differences (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Therefore, it is important to consider Alberta's educational policies and funding structure to understand Alberta's inclusive education further. Alberta adopted an inclusive approach after reviewing

funding for severe disabilities in the Alberta education system uncovered inconsistencies in

students' support and services (Alberta Education, 2009). There continue to be inconsistencies in

how Alberta Education defines inclusive education and how inclusive education is implemented.

Funding Structure. Similarly, it is important to consider the funding structure for

inclusive education. Before inclusive education, Alberta operated on a "diagnosis for dollars"

approach in which students with severe disabilities were provided with additional funding, thus

increasing the benefit diagnoses (Williamson & Gilham, 2017). Now, the funding structure is

based on the school's holistic needs (Alberta Education, 2020b). This funding structure is more

aligned with an inclusive model, but it is unclear how this funding model impacts students.

Theoretically, this funding structure provides greater flexibility in providing supports; however,

it also could result in mismanagement of the funding, which could negatively impact students

with exceptionalities who rely on this funding to receive supports (Williamson & Gilham, 2017).

Specific Teaching Practice. Within the literature, studies have referenced different

specific teaching practices used by teachers to implement inclusive education. For example,

Bešić and colleagues (2016) indicated that teachers discussed their use of cooperative learning,

in which students supported and learned from each other, often without direct teacher support.

Interestingly, this was the only study that utilized different classrooms in an inclusive context,

which traditionally is not viewed as inclusive. Teachers viewed this practice as acceptable,

noting the benefits for all students to have access to one-on-one time with special educators.

McLeskey and colleagues (2014) found that the teachers at the school they studied used

ongoing Response-to-Intervention progress monitoring and informal measures to best support

students. Progress monitoring refers to using data on student progress to inform instruction and

determine the effectiveness of practice to modify it in a timely fashion (McLeskey et al., 2014).

This strategy emphasized the school principal, who noted that it was unclear how to best support students without evidence. Therefore, progress monitoring in the classroom context was used to determine the allocation of resources at this school, including the reallocation of staff to meet student needs. It is concerning that only one school in their study noted progress monitoring as a factor that helped support inclusive education. It is unclear if progress monitoring is being utilized more widely to support the implementation of inclusive education.

   Training. Teachers described the necessity of appropriate training, whether from teacher preparation programs, graduate classes, or professional development sessions (Smith & Smith, 2000). Forlin (2001) noted that teachers indicated a lack of appropriate professional training was their third most significant area of stress. Further, this study found 89% of teachers believed their pre-service training preparation was inadequate to support students with exceptionalities. Although it is unclear in the literature what exactly appropriate inclusive education training looks like, it is clear that many teacher preparation programs historically have not provided this training or teachers found their training inadequate in preparing them for the inclusive classroom (McCrimmon, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2000). Forlin's (2001) study notes that over two-thirds of teachers received no formal training on educating students with exceptionalities. Therefore, professional development sessions have been crucial in supporting teachers' implementation of inclusive education, and many teachers seek out these opportunities (McLeskey et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2000). In professional development sessions, teachers actively seek answers and strategies to support students and appreciate consultative professional development opportunities (McLeskey et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2000).

   The literature provides a wealth of factors that support the implementation of inclusive education. Collaboration between staff in the school and beyond supports teachers through

facilitating open communication and supporting student success through both formal and informal means (Becker et al., 2000; Bešić et al., 2016; Ely, 2013; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Smith & Smith, 2000). Similarly, the importance of sufficient tangible and non-tangible resources, including time and personnel, is emphasized (Bešić et al., 2016; Craig, 2016; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; McLeskey et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Much of the research has focused on the attitudes and overall commitment towards inclusive education, which means ensuring adequate staffing of people who are passionate about inclusion, especially the principal (Bešić et al., 2016; Idol, 2006; Lyons et al., 2016; Male, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Vaz et al., 2015; Wlodarczyk et al., 2015). Teachers emphasized the value of belonging, both for students with and without exceptionalities and the importance of considering individual provincial and territorial factors that impact inclusion, such as educational policy and the funding structure (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Further at the regional level, it is also important to consider school district factors such as staffing, general classroom assistance, and professional development opportunities (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Sokal & Katz, 2015). Teachers have also indicated the benefits of using progress monitoring and individualized instruction to support students in inclusive education (Bešić et al., 2016; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; McLeskey et al., 2014). Finally, teachers also discussed the importance of attending appropriate and ongoing training to ensure they can support their students (Forlin, 2001; McLeskey et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2000;).

Hindering and Wish List Factors

In contrast to the variety of helping factors mentioned above, it is important to consider the factors that may impede inclusive education implementation. In ECIT, a hindering factor is

anything that impedes a phenomenon (Butterfield et al., 2009). Few studies have examined these factors explicitly. Although the research is sparse, four factors emerged, including (1) lack of adequate training, (2) lack of support and/or resources, (3) the additional responsibilities associated with inclusive environments, and (4) student mental health and behaviours. As many of the hindering factors correspond to factors teachers wish to see for inclusive education (i.e., wish list factors), this section will combine hindering and wish list factors. A wish list factor in ECIT is something that participants did not have at the time of their experience but is something the participant believes would be beneficial for the experience (Butterfield et al., 2009).

Lack of Adequate Training. Teachers have reported that a lack of education contributes to their negative attitudes and experiences in inclusive education (Ely, 2013). As previously mentioned, teachers have historically received little information about inclusive education in training programs (McCrimmon, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2000). Although teachers have been receiving training in inclusive education, many teacher preparation programs do not require training in this area (McCrimmon, 2015; Sokal & Katz, 2015). McCrimmon (2015) found that while pre-service teacher programs may offer courses on relevant psychological classroom principles or broad topics related to diverse learners or curriculum and practices, there are no programs in Canada that offer training in childhood disabilities and "research-informed effective classroom based intervention practices" (p. 235). These studies suggest an orientation of pre-service programs in preparing future teachers to work with typically developing students instead of students who would be found in an inclusive education classroom.

Although there is limited training for pre-service teachers across Canada in inclusive education or supporting students with exceptionalities, Forlin's and Chambers' (2011) study suggests the impact in adding such supports may only limitedly impact pre-service teachers. In

their study, the authors examined the impact of a 39-hour, third-year undergraduate education course on inclusive policies and practices. The pre-service teacher's attitudes, concerns, sentiments, confidence, and knowledge were examined through pre-and post-measures using the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale. Findings from this study suggest that while the course significantly improved pre-service teachers' knowledge and confidence about inclusion, albeit slightly, it also increased their levels of predicted stress and concerns about inclusion and did not significantly impact improving attitudes towards inclusion. The authors conclude that pre-service teacher training programs must consider the ethical components of increasing knowledge and confidence through undergraduate courses while also targeting how to support pre-service teachers long-term to manage their stress and concerns.

While the results of Forlin's & Chamber's (2011) study provide hope towards the impact of pre-service education programs on increasing teacher's knowledge and confidence in inclusive education, most in-service teachers currently have limited training in their teacher training programs. As a result of limited, if any, training in preparation programs, teachers often seek out professional development on inclusive education during their teaching career; however, the impact of professional development opportunities on the implementation of inclusive education is still unclear (Ely, 2013; Idol, 2006; Sokal & Katz, 2015; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). In a review of research on professional development for in-service teachers on the topic of inclusive education, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) found the impact on this type of professional development to be fragmented. Nearly half of the studies on professional development examined the use of action research, whereby "teachers worked together in inquiry-based projects to improve inclusive practices." (p. 331). This type of professional development was found to increase teachers' confidence and self-efficacy and introduce teachers to new concepts that

support inclusive education but had mixed results in changing teachers' views of struggling students. While this type of professional development may support teachers, the long-term commitment (5 weeks to 3 years) may deter teachers. Professional development through on-site training from specialists with follow-up helped improve inclusive practices, but these practices still varied across teachers. In addition, on-site training requires significant administrative support and instructional time allocated. Attending workshops on inclusive practices generally alter their teaching practices and improves their knowledge and attitudes towards inclusive education; however, these opportunities are ongoing (2 days to 2-week commitment).

While Waitoller and Artiles' (2013) review found support for professional development in changing teachers' attitudes and confidence, most studies (89%) on teachers' professional development did not examine the impact these opportunities had on students. Of the studies that did examine this impact, results varied. For example, two studies (Alton-Lee et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2005) found teachers' professional development positively impacted students' attitudes towards those with disabilities in the classroom, while other studies (e.g., Deppeler, 2006; Layne et al., 2008) found professional development lead to improvements to students with and without exceptionalities' academic achievements. Overall, the research on professional development shows differing effects on teachers, although they may have an initial positive effect on students.

It is also important to note teachers' barriers to attending professional development opportunities, as outlined in the Waitoller and Artiles (2013) study. Many opportunities require ongoing commitment ranging from two days in some workshops to up to three years. In addition, most opportunities offered to teachers and schools were part of university research projects; therefore, teachers would need to be close to universities to attend these programs. Although professional development for in-service teachers may be supportive, there are time,

financial, and proximity factors that may make these options inaccessible to many teachers.

Without training in supporting and teaching diverse students from teacher preparation programs, unsurprisingly, teachers are reluctant to implement inclusive education (Sokal & Katz, 2015). When teachers implement inclusive education, lack of adequate training contributes to feelings of isolation and powerlessness in their classrooms (Ely, 2013). Many teachers have identified that, in order for inclusive education to be successful, they require adequate training (Ely, 2013; Idol, 2006). Specifically, teachers would like to see additional training for in-service teachers and mandated requirements for pre-service teachers (Ely, 2013). As mentioned above, lack of adequate training contributes to teacher stress; however, it is unclear what adequate training exactly looks like, other than including at least some instruction in pre-service teacher programs (Forlin, 2001; McCrimmon, 2015). Therefore, the first wish list factor for implementing inclusive education is better training for teachers in their pre-service programs to address in-coming teachers and additional professional development for in-service teachers.

Lack of Support and/or Resources. Adequate supports and resources were helping factors, while the lack of these factors hindered implementation. Lack of support contributed to negative experiences and contributed to feelings of isolation in inclusive classrooms (Ely, 2013). Teachers also indicated that the lack of personnel resources, such as special educators to consult with, was a significant challenge (Bešić et al., 2016; Carrington et al., 2016). Similarly, the lack of adequate time for planning with other teachers also hindered inclusive education as the teachers often co-teach (Bešić et al., 2016). To support teachers in implementing inclusive education, Ely (2013) emphasizes the need for adequate resources, supports, and planning time.

Additional Responsibilities. Teachers have indicated that inclusive classrooms increase their overall responsibilities (Carrington et al., 2016; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005). Specifically,

teaching inclusive classrooms adds additional meetings to their schedules and requires additional time for planning and program development to make program adjustments and modify instruction for students with exceptionalities (Carrington et al., 2016). In addition, teachers noted that inclusive classrooms add additional supervision to ensure student safety (Carrington et al., 2016). Notably, these findings are based on teachers' perceived increase in responsibilities instead of the objective measurement of these responsibilities. Nonetheless, to balance these additional responsibilities, providing teachers with additional time to plan and flexibility to collaborate with others would support inclusive education (Ely, 2013).

Student Mental Health and Behaviours. Inclusive classrooms include a broad range of student needs. Teachers indicated that students with internalizing mental health and externalizing disruptive behaviour challenges are difficult to manage within the classroom (Carrington et al., 2016; Smith & Smith, 2000; Sokal & Katz, 2015). Internalizing mental health concerns are experienced internally by the student and often hidden, making these concerns more challenging to notice and support in the classroom (Sokal & Katz, 2015). On the other hand, teachers find that externalizing behavioural concerns detract from inclusive classrooms, and some teachers believe the whole class suffers (Smith & Smith, 2000). Teachers may be supported in teaching students with mental health and behavioural concerns through additional training and the provision of additional resources such as personnel support (Ely, 2013).

Currently, there is limited research on factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education. Based on a review of the literature, four factors hinder implementation. Two of these factors are generally opposite factors to those that support the implementation, including the lack of adequate training and lack of supports and resources (Bešić et al., 2016; Carrington et al., 2016; Ely, 2013; Forlin, 2001; Idol, 2006; McCrimmon, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2000; Sokal &

Katz, 2015; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Also, the additional responsibilities that come with implementing inclusive education and the increase of student mental health and behavioural concerns in the classroom hinder implementation (Carrington et al., 2016; Ely, 2013; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005; Smith & Smith, 2000; Sokal & Katz, 2015). These hindering factors lend themselves to factors that may support the implementation of inclusive education, including additional training for both pre-service and in-service teachers, the provision of adequate resources and support such as personnel and additional time to plan, and increased flexibility to collaborate with other educators. Overall, additional research is required to identify factors that negatively impact the implementation of inclusive education.

Chapter Summary

Based on the information that has been presented in this chapter, studying inclusive education is more opaque than it is clear. Considering the different degrees of implementation and definitions, it is unsurprising that methodological concerns in this area contribute to the uncertainty regarding the utility of inclusive education. Nevertheless, Alberta has adopted an inclusive education approach. Although Alberta Education (2018) has provided a definition, six principles, and documents to support the implementation of inclusive education, there is currently no uniform way to support inclusive education. Although the research is sparse, some factors have been identified that support inclusive education that can be conceptualized from multiple levels in education. Similarly, the research also provides four areas that hinder this implementation and suggests additional factors that may support it.

Although these studies provide some indications about helping, hindering, and wish list factors in implementing inclusive education, they also have methodological concerns. Specifically, these studies use different definitions of inclusive education that could impact their

findings. Many of these studies have purposefully selected their sample based on school districts or schools identified as having implemented inclusive education well. Finally, the results from these studies commonly describe components that are more broadly related to education, as opposed to specific to inclusive education.

The current study uses an ECIT framework to fill the gap regarding what factors teachers identify as hindering inclusive education and what factors teachers wish to support the implementation. This study also examines the factors that teachers identify as supporting their implementation. To better understand teacher's definitions of inclusive education, the current study will also examine how teachers define and describe inclusive education to add contextual information to the factors teachers identify. Further, unlike other studies that have examined inclusive education in Canada, recruitment will be open to all elementary teachers rather than teachers from school divisions or schools identified as successfully implementing inclusive education. This is further described in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines and describes the chosen methodology, Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, and the procedures used for the current study. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how teachers implement inclusion in their classrooms. To ascertain this, it is important to determine teachers' understanding of inclusive education and factors that help or hinder their ability to teach an inclusive education classroom. Considering the research questions of this study, the methodology aligned to answer these questions was the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), using qualitative, open-ended, semi-structured interviews (structured questions that allow for varied responses; Butterfield et al., 2009).

Qualitative Research

Hennink and colleagues (2011) note that qualitative research, similar to quantitative research, is an umbrella term covering various techniques used to analyze information. Qualitative research focuses on individual, in-depth experiences and examines issues from participants' perspectives. These authors emphasize that qualitative research is more than just the application of qualitative methods but rather that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 9). As identified by Willig (2008), there are many reasons to use qualitative methods. Some reasons include when there is a need for a sophisticated and detailed understanding of the problem when the goal is to empower individuals; when the context is important to the question, to develop or add to theories about specific populations or samples, or when quantitative methods do not fit with the problem statement. As mentioned in chapter one, there is a lack of specific information about this project's research questions. Therefore, the research questions lend themselves to a qualitative and exploratory research design.

Philosophical Assumptions and Interpretive Framework

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that in qualitative research, it is important for researchers to have an awareness and understanding of their interpretive frameworks (also referred to as paradigms) and philosophical assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological). An interpretive framework describes how researchers view and understand the data they encounter and guides how researchers choose research questions and gather data (Hennink et al., 2011). Researchers' philosophical assumptions guide and are guided by their interpretive framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink et al., 2011).

My interpretive framework follows a social constructivism perspective. Social constructivism, also known as interpretivism, explores concepts as they are created with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This framework considers participants' specific contexts to understand their settings and believes that knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered (Walker, 2015). Social constructivists propose we understand subjective perceptions rather than objective truths (Willis, 2012); therefore, this framework also emphasizes that researchers must recognize the role their background and history has on their interpretation of the information (Walker, 2015). These components will be further discussed in the reflexivity and axiology section below.

Ontology

Ontology focuses on the nature of reality and "refers to what we think reality looks like and how we view the world" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 11). Ontology posits that the way we view reality is complex and can be interpreted through many lenses (Willis, 2012). There is not one reality; instead, our perspective provides meaning to what we experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, ontology is implicated in the way researchers report their findings (themes) and overall results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aimed to understand the helping and

hindering aspects identified by elementary school teachers in Alberta for the implementation of inclusive education and aspects teachers wished for, and how they define and describe inclusive education. Considering the differences in lived experiences and inclusive education's historical development, a social constructivist perspective was adopted for this research.

Social constructivism emphasizes that experiences and perceptions are mediated and constructed by historical, cultural, linguistic, and political factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Willig, 2008). In social constructivism, these factors and interactions with others help form subjective meanings and realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, social constructivism believes in multiple instead of a single knowledge (Willig, 2008) and focuses on capturing participants' views through broad and open-ended questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Epistemology

Epistemology focuses on the concept of knowledge of reality or truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, epistemology explores how knowledge is ultimately known and the relationship between the researcher and knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink et al., 2011). In a social constructivist framework, knowledge of reality can be explored and understood through conversations between the researcher and participants about the participants' reflection on their experiences and conversations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, knowledge is dependent on social, historical, and political contexts, and reality is constructed through our experiences within these contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is also important to consider that researchers construct meaning based on these conversations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, knowledge is genuinely co-constructed. As a researcher involved in the co-construction of knowledge, it is important to acknowledge my role. This is further discussed in the reflexivity and axiology section below.

Reflexivity and Axiology

Axiology refers to the researcher's values and biases, while reflexivity refers to the researcher's specific actions to manage these values and biases (Berger, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Many qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of researchers acknowledging and discussing their values and positions that may not only shape and guide their research but may also influence their interpretation of the data (Berger, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). By stating their axiology and making a plan for reflexivity, researchers acknowledge the role of their values and biases concerning the study context and plan to manage these biases (Berger, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

First, I must acknowledge my professional position as a Registered Psychologist who has worked in various education settings with varying levels of inclusive practices. From these experiences, I have empathy for students with exceptionalities and recognize that some inclusive environments do not support students to the extent they require. This position had the potential to create biases in myself to focus on inclusive education's negative aspects. Secondly, as an instructor, I have taught courses on inclusive education. I have the biases that inclusive education can be beneficial and recognize the difficulties teachers have concerning implementing inclusive education daily. Finally, as a researcher from a social constructivist framework, I acknowledge that my values may affect this study's results. Therefore, I acknowledge that I need to manage these biases and ensure they are not impacting data collection or interpretation.

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), as a methodology, has several components to ensure the credibility of the data through their nine credibility checks (Butterfield et al., 2009). Of these credibility checks, several encourage reflexive practices by verifying data interpretation through others (e.g., experts, participants, second coder). While I undertook these checks (further

discussed in the "data interpretation," "credibility checks," and "reporting the results" section below), I also took specific actions to manage my own biases. Specifically, I kept a reflective journal where I documented my steps in collecting data and wrote any thoughts about the data as I collected and analyzed it. For example, I reviewed interview each recording immediately after the interview and reflected on whether I asked leading questions. After reflecting on this, I ensured I referred back to these notes before conducting the next interview. Additional information about this process during data collection is described in this chapter's interview fidelity section. During data analysis, specifically during category extraction, I was also aware of how my biases could impact the data. While extracting categories, I documented any thoughts I had regarding interpretations and explicitly listed where evidence for each category was noted in transcripts to ensure the categories were reflective of the participants' experiences.

ECIT has traditionally centred from a positivist paradigm, primarily due to taking a quantitative approach in its first iteration as Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954; McDaniel et al., 2020). The shifts from CIT into ECIT (further described below) have allowed other paradigm stances, including social constructivism, to fit this method (McDaniel et al., 2020). Specifically, the allowance of retrospective self-report acknowledges the role of subjective experiences, a central tenant of the ontological views of social constructivism. Further, while many of the credibility checks of ECIT encourage the removal of the researcher's axiology (biases), the researcher is still involved in the co-construction of the data due to the requirement of follow-up questions and prompts. While these questions and prompts are kept consistent among participants, the researcher remains part of the co-construction of the data. While the credibility attempt to mitigate bias, their existence in ECIT acknowledges that the researcher's values may influence the research. Therefore, this methodical approach helps

protect the impact of axiology but does not ignore it entirely. Overall, while there is potential for contention between a social constructivist paradigm and ECIT, the overlap allows it to be an appropriate paradigm nonetheless.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the way researchers gain knowledge about aspects of the world and describes the process to obtain this knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink et al., 2011). It describes the details of this process and follows an inductive and flexible approach to data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Considering my research questions and my position as a social constructivist, which emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant, the method of ECIT fit well as it provided a very methodical format to ensure all participants had similar opportunities to explore the reality of teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Current Local and World Events

As mentioned in the ontology section above, a social constructivist believes in the importance of examining the social world in the phenomena being studied. In this study, this means that the current climate of education in Alberta and different events occurring globally create and shift our thoughts of reality. In December 2019, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a severe respiratory infection, was identified in Wuhan City, China (Chaplin, 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a). By March 11, 2020, COVID-19 had spread to 114 countries and infected over 118,000 people; in response, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). Cases of COVID-19 were identified in Alberta in early March 2020 (Government of Alberta, 2020a), and on March 15, all school buildings from kindergarten to grade 12 were ordered to suspend face-to-face classes (Government of Alberta, 2020b). The school closure continued for the remainder of the 2019-

2020 school year, and teachers were to provide alternative options to their students, such as providing remote, online learning opportunities or opportunities to learn asynchronously through work packages (Government of Alberta, 2020c).

This study's data collection began on May 16, 2020; teachers had been teaching remotely for two months. Initial interviews with participants were conducted from May 19 to May 27, 2020. Given the ongoing and rapid changes, it was important for data to be collected quickly to ensure no significant shifts in education, which would create new aspects that may impact views of reality. It is also important to consider the specific context during data collection. The week before and during initial interviews, hospitalization and new infection rates were low, and restrictions on activities were beginning to lift (Government of Alberta, 2020d,e). COVID-19 created an unprecedented shift in education and the role of a teacher. The closure of school buildings and movement to online learning occurred very quickly and extended over a long time. In their interviews (discussed in Chapter 4), some participants mentioned the impact COVID-19 had on their teaching and discussed their concerns about returning to in-person classes.

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) investigates significant events or incidents identified by participants through a semi-structured interview procedure (Chell, 1998). Butterfield and colleagues (2009) identify that the focus of ECIT is on "critical events, incidents, or factors that help promote or detract from the effective performance of some activity or the experience of a specific situation or event" (Butterfield et al., 2009, p. 266).

ECIT is an extension of Critical Incident Technique (CIT), which originated from industrial and organizational psychology (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). CIT has evolved into ECIT five ways: (1) from a primarily behavioural focus to studying psychological

states and experiences, (2) from emphasizing direct observation to accepting retrospective self-report, (3) from the way data is analyzed subjectively to a more methodical approach, (4) from the addition of new measures to establish the trustworthiness of the results, and (5) from the adding of the contextual questions to begin the interview (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). The technique's seminal paper (Flanagan, 1954) outlined its initial use in selecting and classifying aircrews in the US Army Air Force's Aviation Psychology Program during World War II. Recently, ECIT has been utilized more widely in other fields, including psychology, education, communications, nursing, medicine, and social work (Butterfield et al., 2005). Considering the changes to the technique by Butterfield and colleagues (2005, 2009), these researchers have since renamed the method "Enhanced" Critical Incident Technique.

ECIT is a qualitative method; however, it initially took a very quantitative perspective to discuss validity and reliability (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998; Flanagan, 1954). Specifically, it focused on quantifying participation rates of agreement of critical incidents and provided rigidly standardized procedures (Butterfield et al., 2005). Butterfield and colleagues (2005) proposed this was, in part, due to the lack of acceptance of qualitative methods as a scientific tool in research, noting that since the publication of Flanagan's seminal paper (1954), qualitative methods have become more widely accepted. Overall, the method tends to take a methodical approach to qualitative research that outlines multiple steps and credibility checks to maximize the data's credibility or trustworthiness.

Overview of ECIT

The overall focus of ECIT is on three types of critical incidents (factors): helping factors, hindering factors, and wish list factors (Butterfield et al., 2009). Butterfield and colleagues (2009) summarize the five steps of ECIT, as initially described by Flanagan: "(a) ascertaining the

general aims of the activity to be studied, (b) making plans and setting specifications, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, and (e) data interpretation and report on the findings" (p. 267). Although these five steps are outlined, Flanagan (1954) emphasized the need to modify and adapt CIT, noting that flexibility in data collection should be considered to fit the specific phenomenon being studied. Therefore, any components that differ from the procedures outlined by Flanagan (1954) or Butterfield and colleagues (2009) will be highlighted.

Step 1: Ascertaining the General Aims of the Activity to be Studied

The first step in ECIT research, following the determination of research questions, is to identify the general aims of the research (Butterfield et al., 2009). General aims examine, from the perspective of participants, the activity's objective and the expectations a person is to accomplish by engaging in the activity (Butterfield et al., 2005). In the present study, it was important to determine the objective of inclusive education and what expectations were for teachers. To ascertain this, I referred to the documents published by Alberta Education. As mentioned in chapter two, Alberta Education's definition of inclusive education is "a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all learners" but have also emphasized a focus on the "attitude and approach" on equal opportunities, and an emphasis on specifically supporting the needs of students with exceptionalities (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 1). This study aimed to examine how teachers implement inclusive education to determine how to support teachers in this implementation.

Step 2: Making Plans and Setting Specifications

Preparation is essential when using ECIT, and Butterfield and colleagues (2009) outline three components to consider. The first component outlines what will be asked about in the research study, and the second component involves creating an interview guide. The third

component, which involves creating training procedures for other researchers to collect data, was not relevant to the current project, as I conducted all interviews. To accomplish the first two components, I first considered my research questions and general aims. Using these as a frame of reference, I then created an interview guide, adapting a similar guide found in Butterfield's and colleague's (2009) publication (see Appendix B).

The interview itself consists of four sections. Following the establishment of rapport, section one reviewed an introduction to the research, statement of the purpose and anticipated length of the interview, and provided the participants with an opportunity to ask questions. Informed consent was also re-confirmed during this section. Section two asked contextual questions about how the participant viewed inclusive education. Specifically, participants were asked to define inclusive education, describe what they think a successful inclusive classroom looks like, and discuss their current and historical confidence in teaching an inclusive education classroom. The third section discusses "critical incidents" or "factors" of what has helped and hindered participants in implementing inclusive education well, as well as factors that might be have been helpful to the participant (wish list factors). The interview ended by collecting demographic information relevant to the participants' teaching.

Step 3: Data Collection

Participants were interviewed at two different times for this research project. The first interview collected most of the data for this study, while the second interview clarified information collected in the first interview (further information about the second interview is described below). Due to COVID-19, interviews were facilitated either via telephone, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams with optional video, at the participant's discretion, and each interview was recorded to ensure accuracy and to allow for later transcription. Interviews continued until the

point of exhaustiveness was reached. In ECIT, exhaustiveness, also referred to as saturation or redundancy, refers to the point in which no new critical incidents or wish list factors are added (Butterfield et al., 2009; Flanagan, 1954). Exhaustiveness is further discussed in the "Data Analysis" section below. To ensure participants' confidentiality, a list of participant information and corresponding numbers was kept in a separate locked document from any of their interview data and participants were only referenced based on their participant number.

Interview One. Before conducting the first interview, rapport was established with each participant by engaging in small talk. After the participant appeared comfortable, I provided a brief overview of the study and interview expectation, then reconfirmed informed consent with each participant. Once informed consent was reconfirmed, I began recording the interview and began reading the interview guide. First, I asked participants the contextual questions surrounding what inclusive education means and what a successful inclusive classroom looks like. I also asked participants about their confidence in inclusive education and whether this has changed over the years.

Next, I began to collect information regarding critical incidents. Specifically, I asked participants what has helped them in implementing inclusive education. As participants identified helping critical incidents, I asked follow-up questions clarifying the participants' definition of the incident, the meaning and importance of the incident, and an example of the factor's helpfulness. The same procedures were employed for the hindering critical incidents, which focused on what has made implementing inclusive education more difficult, and the wish list factors, which asked if there were other things that would help participants teach in an inclusive classroom that they have not had access to.

During the interviews, I employed a variety of active listening skills, such as

paraphrasing, using non-verbal cues (e.g., nodding and looking at the camera on interviews with video), and brief vocalization to communicate listening (Butterfield et al., 2009). During the interview, I also asked follow-up questions to help ensure full clarity about the participants' experiences. During the interviews, I took extensive field notes to ensure any potential critical incidents and factors could be followed up on with clarifying questions. Butterfield and colleagues (2009) mentioned it was important to progress through the interview at a natural pace and not rush through them too quickly. Therefore, I followed up with participants throughout the interview, asking what other critical incidents or factors they have thought of. At the end of the interview, I also summarized the critical incidents and factors discussed and asked whether there were any others that we had not had a chance to talk about. The interview concluded with demographic questions related to the participant's teaching experience. While Butterfield and colleagues (2009) also included additional demographic questions about the participants' age, level of education, marital status, ethnic background, and more, these were deemed irrelevant to my study and were not asked. At this point in the interview, I stopped the recording of the interview. Participants were reminded of the second follow-up interview and asked what type of gift card they would like to thank them for their time.

Interview Two. The second interview had three purposes. First, the interview helped clarify any potential critical incidents or wish list factors a participant alluded to but did not elaborate on (Butterfield et al., 2009). Specifically, this allowed me to clarify if an ambiguous statement was a critical incident and obtain more specific information about its importance and critical incident examples. Secondly, this interview provided participants with an opportunity to confirm the critical incidents and wish list factors identified in their interview. Thirdly, the participants were also given an opportunity to review the categories their critical incidents and

wish list factors have been placed into (Butterfield et al., 2009). To facilitate these purposes, before the second interview, the participants were sent a copy of the critical incident and wish list factors identified in their first interview organized in chronological order, as well as a list of the categories generated from their factors and excerpts of the transcript for any items requiring follow-up. Therefore, this second interview served as a point for participants to cross-check the information as part of a reliability indicator (further discussed in this paper's Credibility section). This interview was facilitated either through email or via telephone, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams (Butterfield et al., 2005). A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Step 4: Data Analysis

Data analysis in ECIT has several steps, including data organization, identifying critical incidents and wish list factors, and creating categories. Flanagan (1954) emphasizes researchers should determine their frame of reference before analysis. A frame of reference clarifies how the data will be used to ensure the data is analyzed appropriately and to distinguish between often hundreds of critical incidents (Butterfield et al., 2009). Therefore, the frame of reference provides grounding to bring the researcher back to the research's purpose when identifying critical incidents (Butterfield et al., 2009). In terms of the current study, I intended to use the results to support teachers in inclusive environments by presenting results at conferences and publications. Therefore, my frame of reference is based on information that will lead to supporting teachers. To facilitate the use of my frame of reference during data analysis, I frequently referred back to my frame of reference and asked myself whether the critical incident of factor provides information that will lead to supporting teachers.

Data Organization. As mentioned above, each interview was recorded and later transcribed. In this study, an online software program (Rev.com) was used to facilitate the ease

of transcribing. Each transcript was then reviewed in full to ensure accuracy. While Butterfield and colleagues (2009) recommend a manual method of organizing data, all data was organized using separate documents on a computer. The researchers emphasize the importance of reviewing transcripts in "batches" to determine when exhaustiveness occurs. The twelve transcripts were randomly organized in batches of three interviews (four total batches).

Identifying and Extracting Critical Incidents. In the first step of data analysis, I reviewed each document independently to identify the contextual information and the parts of the interview that were helping and hindering critical incidents, and wish list factors by highlighting them with different colours in the transcript. Specifically, I began with the first interview in batch one and highlighted the different aspects of the interviews and their supporting information regarding the importance and examples. Once the contextual information, critical incidents, and factors were identified, I extracted the critical incidents and wish list factors and organized them into a chart in a new document, referencing the participant number and transcript line. In ECIT, the contextual information is analyzed separately from the incidents and factors and will be discussed following step 5 of ECIT (Butterfield et al., 2009). These steps were repeated with the two additional interviews in batch one. In this stage, I began tracking whether any incidents or factors required follow-up with participants in interview two.

Forming and Merging Categories. Once the critical incidents and wish list factors from batch one were extracted from their transcripts, they were analyzed and organized into temporary categories. Beginning with interview one, I reviewed the extracted helping critical incidents, organizing and placing them into temporary categories in a new master document. Using the temporary helping categories of interview one as an initial list, I reviewed the temporary helping categories of interview two, identifying patterns, similarities, and differences. If a temporary

category of the second interview was similar to a category of the first interview, the information

from interview two was included with the category information from interview one. Category

names were adjusted to reflect both participants' words. If a temporary category examined

different elements, it was added as a new category to the initial list. The same procedures were

followed in analyzing the hindering incident categories and wish list factor categories.

After the first batch, each batch of interviews was analyzed using the same procedures,

beginning with identification and extraction and then forming and merging categories. As new

critical incidents and factors were added to categories and new categories were made, it was

necessary to change, split, or merge categories (Butterfield et al., 2009). Often categories became

interconnected and, therefore, reflected a broader category with subcategories; in these cases,

categories were merged. As outlined by Butterfield and colleagues (2009), to determine which

categories to merge, split, or change, I referred to my frame of reference to consider whether the

decision would improve clarity for the intended purpose, supporting teachers. Additionally, the

authors suggested considering the frequency of a category. They noted when fewer than 25% of

participants mentioned a critical incidents or factors within one category that it might be

beneficial to consider combining categories. Although this was considered, some were better

suited as independent categories due to differences in the participants' emphasis. An operational

definition was created, noting the various themes within the category.

The formation of new categories when analyzing each interview was tracked using a

table (see Appendix D) to determine when exhaustiveness has occurred (Butterfield et al., 2009).

The number of new categories created dropped significantly after the third interview (end of the

first batch), and no new categories were created after analyzing the tenth interview. This

indicated that exhaustiveness had occurred and that no new interviews needed to be collected

(Butterfield et al., 2009). I also tracked any incidents or factors mentioned but not elaborated upon and followed up on them with participants in interview two (Butterfield et al., 2009).

Step 5: Data Interpretation, Credibility Checks, and Reporting the Results

The final step of ECIT ensures the credibility of the data through extensive credibility checks and the incorporation of contextual information (Butterfield et al., 2009). In ECIT, researchers have used a range of credibility checks (Butterfield et al., 2005). Eight of the nine credibility checks commonly used in ECIT were applied in this study to increase the data's trustworthiness (Butterfield et al., 2005; 2009).

Recording Interviews. As with other qualitative methods, recording interviews is important to ensure data collection and analysis (Butterfield et al., 2009). As mentioned above, all interviews were recorded and transcribed, then transcripts were reviewed to ensure accuracy.

Interview Fidelity. Butterfield and colleagues (2009) encourage having an expert in ECIT review interviews as data is collected. While this would have valuable, it was not feasible at the time of data collection. As a researcher from a social constructivist perspective, I had to consider the context when collecting data. As described above, the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted teachers greatly, and there were rapid changes in education. Therefore, it was important to collect data quickly to help ensure that the data was not collected under drastically different circumstances between participants. All interviews were scheduled and conducted in less than two weeks. As a result, it was not possible to have an expert review and provide feedback on interview recordings in such a short time. Considering this limitation, it was even more important to follow the research procedures precisely and maintain consistency.

To facilitate fidelity of the interview process during interviews, I followed the interview guide as closely as possible (Butterfield et al., 2009). Also, I reviewed the recordings of the

interviews immediately to reflect on my interviewing skills. Specifically, I reflected on what types of questions were asked (e.g., leading questions such as "did you mean…" vs. open-ended questions such as "tell me more about…"), considered my tone (e.g., curious vs. with judgement), how I was communicating active listening skills (e.g., avoiding agreeing with participants and instead of using phrases such as "I hear what you are saying"), and how I summarized their information (e.g., summarizing as closely to the participants' words as possible and being aware not to add analysis into the summary). With these reflections, I generated a list of behaviours to be aware of and reviewed the list before conducting the next interview.

Independent Extraction. After the data was analyzed, I recruited a colleague, referred to as the independent extractor, to review and extract critical incidents and wish list factors from 25% of the transcripts. Although it would have been ideal to have had someone familiar with ECIT, the independent extractor was familiar with qualitative analysis and inclusive education (Butterfield et al., 2005). To account for this, the independent extractor reviewed several key documents of ECIT to support a thorough understanding of the methodology as a whole. After reviewing these documents, we discussed the logistics, intent, and purpose of the procedures. To facilitate the extraction, I randomly selected (using a randomizing software program) 25% or three of the transcripts and sent them to the independent extractor for review. The independent extractor followed the same procedures identified in step four, identifying and extracting critical incidents. After the extraction, I calculated the rate of agreement between the independent extractor and I. Our initial agreement rate ranged from 60%-100% ($M = 87\%$); however, after discussing the differences, we reached a consensus, and our agreement rate went to 100%.

Exhaustiveness. Exhaustiveness is apparent when new categories have stopped emerging from the data, which is indicative that the area of study has sufficiently been covered, referred to

as saturation or redundancy (Butterfield et al., 2005). This information was tracked in a table throughout the analysis (see Appendix D). Exhaustiveness was achieved after the 10th interview.

Participation Rates. Participant rates refer to the rate by which participants' critical incidents were included in a category (Butterfield et al., 2005). This rate is represented as a percentage (e.g., 75% represents that 75% of participants identified a critical incident in one category; Butterfield et al., 2005). The purpose behind these rates is to establish the relative strength of a category, which supports that the category is significantly related to the study's aim (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). Specifically, a participation rate of 25% is optimal and indicates a credible and group supported experience (Butterfield et al., 2009). As noted in the Forming and Merging Categories section of this chapter, while the participation rate of at least 25% was considered for each category; ultimately, some categories were better suited as independent categories. Participant rates for each category have been included in chapter four.

Category Review. The independent extractor was also used as an independent judge to verify the categories. This involved categorizing a random sample of 25% of the critical incidents into the identified categories (Butterfield et al., 2005). The independent judge was sent a summary document with the temporary category titles, their operational definitions, and three documents with 25% of the critical incidents and factors. The independent judge reviewed 57 of 227 helping critical incidents, 31 of 123 hindering critical incidents, and 25 of 97 wish list factors. The independent judge reviewed the summary document first to gain familiarity with the categories and their meanings, then she sorted each of the critical incidents and wish list factors into the category that she felt captured the essence of the experience.

A rate of agreement following discussion of at least 80% is considered suitable for ECIT (Butterfield et al., 2009). Our rate of agreement on the helping and hindering critical incidents

and wish list factors were 84%, 68%, and 68%, respectively; however, after a discussion was 100%. The initial differences fell into one of three categories: the independent judge agreed with the initial categorization, and no further action was required (41%); the researcher agreed with the independent coder's categorization (7%), and the independent judge agreed with the initial categorization, but both parties agreed it also fit into another pre-existing category (52%).

Participant Cross-Checking. As mentioned in the data collection section, cross-checking was employed in a second interview (Butterfield et al., 2005). Consistent with Butterfield and colleagues (2009), participants were sent a copy of the extracted critical incident and wish list factors identified in their initial interview and a list of categories with the incidents and factors organized into each category before the second interview. Participants were also sent any excepts from their transcript that required follow-up. Interviews were conducted via email, telephone, or an online platform (Zoom or Microsoft teams). These interviews were not recorded; however, detailed notes were taken and read back to the participant to ensure accuracy.

During the interview, rapport was re-established before the interview began. As identified in the interview guide (see Appendix C for the interview guide), participants were invited to review the factors to ensure appropriate extraction and category placement. Participants were asked about whether the critical incidents and factors were correct, if anything was missing or needed to be revised, and if they had any other comments that should be included. After confirming the critical incidents and wish list factors, participants were asked about the categories, including if the category titles made sense and captured the intended meaning and if any incidents did not fit in the categories. All participants agreed with the critical incidents and wish list factors, as well as their categorization. One participant wanted to clarify a critical incident and modify the category title, which was honoured and updated. One participant was

unresponsive after three attempts of contact and did not participate in the second interview.

Expert Opinions. The eighth credibility check involves having the categories reviewed by multiple experts in the field of which the study is focused (Butterfield et al., 2009). Butterfield and colleagues (2005) note that "if the experts agree with the categories, it enhances [the categories'] credibility" (p. 487). This credibility check intends to enhance the credibility of the categories. Butterfield and colleagues (2009) recommend asking three broad questions "1. Do you find the categories to be useful? 2. Are you surprised by any of the categories? 3. Do you think there is anything missing based on your experience?" (p. 278). Although four experts were contacted to provide feedback, only one could review the categories.

The expert that was consulted has extensive experience in inclusive education and is an Associate Professor at a University in Alberta. He "found the categories to be accurate and helpful in understanding how teachers view the supports and challenges of inclusive education." While the expert was not surprised by any of the categories, he did feel a few things were missing. He mentioned that the morality of including students and the concept that "all students can learn" did not seem represented in the categories. While this was not mentioned in the categories, participants did discuss this in the contextual aspect, which the expert was not sent as per the ECIT steps. The expert also felt the concepts of growth mindsets for students and teachers, accountability, reliance on research-informed practice, and parent involvement were not included as much as he expected they would be.

Theoretical Agreement. The final check, finding agreement of the categories within the literature (Butterfield et al., 2009) has been conceptualized in two parts: reporting and investigating assumptions underlying the research study and comparing the study results with scholarly literature (Butterfield et al., 2009, 2005). Each part of the credibility check is

summarized in this paper's discussion (chapter five). Consistent with the social constructivist interpretive framework and as discussed by Butterfield and colleagues (2005, 2009), lack of agreement within the literature does not necessarily mean the categories identified in this project are incorrect or irrelevant. Often this means the study at hand has uncovered new information.

Analysis of Contextual Information

In their seminal articles on the ECIT procedures, Butterfield and colleagues (2005, 2009) do not indicate procedures for analyzing the contextual data collected at the beginning of each interview. The contextual data included information about what inclusive education meant to the participant, what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like, and the teacher's confidence in implementing inclusive education. Based on a review of articles published by the researchers (e.g., Howard et al., 2014) and dissertations and theses using ECIT completed under their supervision (e.g., Woolgar, 2012 – under the supervision of Amundson), thematic analysis is the most commonly used method for analyzing the contextual data in ECIT. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within a data set (Bruan & Clarke, 2006). These patterns, referred to as themes, are organized to describe and interpret the phenomenon being studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012).

Thematic analysis can be approached in several different ways. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify that a researcher's choice of approach relates to the data set's purpose. Specifically, it is important to consider whether a researcher intends to code data to fit with a specific research question or whether "the specific research question can evolve through the coding process" (pg. 84). As such, the data can be analyzed using an inductive or theoretical approach. An inductive approach involves identifying themes through links in the data itself, whereas a theoretical (deductive) approach involves organizing the data in pre-existing categories based on a theory or

previous research. Considering the multitude of inclusive education definitions, it was important to understand participants' views of this concept. Therefore, I initially took an inductive approach was taken in analyzing the contextual information. Once the data was initially analyzed, I drew on inclusive education concepts to identify similarities and differences. Using both methods allowed me to remain true to the participants' experiences by not excluding definitions that did not fit with the existing definitions while also drawing parallels between theoretical definitions in research and working definitions of practicing teachers

Another approach Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized was identifying the level of themes. Specifically, a semantic level approach analyzes themes at the surface level, examining the explicit information said. A latent level approach examines the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations of the themes. In thematic analysis, both approaches are commonly combined to understand the data set by identifying individual themes at the semantic level, then collectively examining the meaning at a latent level (Joffe, 2012). Data for this study was analyzed in this way, using both semantic and latent level approaches.

Process of Thematic Analysis. It is important to recognize that the process of thematic analysis is recursive, in that movement throughout the stages of analysis are fluid, and a researcher may need to move backwards in steps to move forward with the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The procedures taken in analyzing the data for this study follow the steps described in Braun and Clarke's (2006) article.

Step 1: Become Familiar with the Data. The first component described by Braun and Clarke (2006) involved transcribing the data, which had already been completed. Nonetheless, it was important to familiarize myself with the data by re-reading the transcripts several times and taking notes about initial ideas about the data. Therefore, I read each transcript in its entirety two

to three times, and I took notes about initial commonalities between each of the transcripts.

      Step 2: Generating Initial Codes. Once I was familiarized with the data, I began to generate initial codes by highlighting aspects of the transcript related to participants' descriptions of inclusive education and their confidence in inclusive education and gave each aspect a label that captured the essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I coded each interview separately, examining the three main questions posed in the interview's contextual portion. These questions were: 1) "what does inclusive education mean to you?," 2) "what does a successful inclusive education classroom look like?," and 3) "How confident do you feel with teaching in an inclusive education classroom on a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident)? Has your confidence changed over the years?" In this step, I examined each question from each transcript at the semantic level. This process was repeated for all interviews until all data was coded. Forty-one codes were created for question one, 51 codes for question two, and 30 codes for question three.

      Step 3 & 4: Searching for Themes & Reviewing Themes. Once the individual interviews were coded, I examined the interviews with each other to identify patterns in the data, which would ultimately create themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, I read the coded data together, then began to collate the data together to create and differentiate overarching themes in the data. In this step, 12 themes were created for question one, 19 themes were created for question two, and 13 themes were created for question three. After this was complete, I reviewed the themes to ensure they were organized appropriately to reflect the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step intends to collapse or separate themes. In this step, the data regarding how teachers describe inclusive education and what an inclusive classroom looks like were analyzed at the latent level to understand any changes in the definition of inclusive education. Following this step, six themes were refined for question one, seven themes were refined for

question two, and seven themes were refined for question three.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes. After the themes were identified and refined, each theme was named and defined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Definitions are used to summarize the essence of the theme succinctly and must summarize the whole theme.

Step 6: Producing the Report. The final step in thematic analysis is to report the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe this step as a complicated story that "convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis" (p. 93). This involved describing the themes concisely but with sufficient detail and providing "particularly vivid examples, or extracts which capture the essence of the point you are demonstrating" (p. 93) and is included in the results and discussion section.

Sampling Procedures and Recruitment

After approval from the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB), teachers were recruited online. For this study, I am interested in all elementary teachers' experiences teaching inclusive education classrooms instead of exclusively teachers who feel successful; therefore, recruitment material was advertised to all teachers. Inclusion criteria to participate in the study as individuals who are (1) certified teachers in Alberta, (2) had taught in at least one classroom with diverse learners (e.g., different cognitive and academic abilities, and/or social, emotional and behavioural challenges) for a minimum of one school year, (3) have taught or are currently teaching from grade one to six in Alberta. A certified teacher is one who has a permanent professional certificate granted by Alberta Education. An inclusive education classroom is defined as a classroom that a teacher identifies as having multiple ability groups instead of a homogenous group.

In their review of the implementation of inclusive education in elementary and secondary

teachers, McGhie-Richmond and colleagues (2013) found significant differences between elementary and secondary teachers in their attitudes towards inclusive education. In some ways, the differences between elementary and secondary teachers regarding their views of inclusive education can be attributed to the level of flexibility and number of teachers in each division. The elementary curriculum tends to be more flexible, and one teacher generally provides most instruction. This allows teachers to overlap curriculums and provide consistent, whole-class management for most of the students' day. Elementary teachers often have one group of students, as opposed to multiple groups of students common in middle and high school. That same flexibility and overlap between courses are not possible in secondary schools. In addition, high school students are often streamed into classes based on academic performance, which minimizes the occurrence of authentic inclusive classrooms (Tsuchida, 2016). Similarly, upper-year students often demonstrate more independence than elementary students, providing teachers with more flexibility in supporting struggling students (McLeaskey et al., 2014). Based on this information, it was important to examine these populations separately. As a result, inclusive education in elementary settings (grades one to six) was the focus of this study.

The sample size in ECIT is not determined by the number of participants but the number of critical incidents; consequently, it is not uncommon for these studies to have a small number of participants (Butterfield et al., 2009). Initially, nine participants were sought out for this study; however, twelve participants requested to participate and were included. Additional participants were not required for this study, as exhaustiveness was established after the tenth interview.

As mentioned above, teachers were recruited online. Specifically, requests were sent to four large Facebook groups focused on Alberta Teachers. Of the four groups contacted, two agreed to post a PDF and introduction to the study. Additionally, a post was made on Twitter,

tagging the Alberta Teacher's Twitter tag and using the hashtags "AB elementary teachers," "inclusive education," "AB ed," and "AB education." In the posts, my email was included so potential participants could email for more information. Once a potential participant contacted me, I sent them a write-up of the study, clarified whether or not they met the inclusion criteria and asked them for a date for the interview. Once the interview time was scheduled, participants were sent the four research questions and a PDF copy of the informed consent form to review and a Qualtrics link with an online form of the informed consent form. Participants were given the opportunity to sign and send back the PDF or to complete the online form. Informed consent was reconfirmed at the beginning of the first interview. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were completed online or via phone. Participants were provided with a $10 gift card to an establishment of their choice for each interview conducted (up to two). Participants were also entered to win one $100 gift card to an establishment of their choice.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the methodology for this research project within teacher's implementation of inclusive education. Specifically, I discussed qualitative research and its relevance to this research study and this researcher's philosophical assumptions and interpretive framework. I discussed the chosen methodology, ECIT, its history, the steps taken in using the method, and eight data credibility checks applied to the data. Finally, I ended the chapter with an overview of the sampling and recruitment procedures.

Chapter Four: Results

In this chapter, I describe the results of the current research project. I begin with an overview of the participant demographics collected during the interview. Next, I describe the contextual data, including how participants described what inclusive education means to them, what a successful inclusive education classroom looks like, and their confidence in inclusive education. Then, I describe the helping and hindering critical incidents and conclude the chapter with a review of the results of the wish list factors.

Participant Demographics

Twelve teachers participated in this study. The participants were all female, certified teachers in Alberta, who taught in a classroom of diverse learners for at least one year and taught or are currently teaching in grades one to six in Alberta. Information about the demographic information was collected at the end of the first interview. This included information about participants' current teaching grade and subject(s), length of time in their current teaching grade, grades taught in the past, and years as teachers (summarized in Table 1). Please note participants are referred to by their participant numbers established at the time of initial contact. Participant numbers 6 and 11 did not participate in this study.

Current Teaching Grade

The participants' current teaching grades included grade 1 (one participant), grade 2 (three participants), grade 5 (one participant), and grade 6 (two participants). Two taught split-grade classrooms, one taught a grade 3/4 split, and one was teaching a grade 5/6 split. Three teachers had previously taught in grades one to six but were currently working in different education roles. P5 was a homeschool facilitator who was teaching grades 3 and 4, and P7 was a System's Principal. In this role, she oversaw all kindergarten and preschool programming for her

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant Number	Currently Teaching Grade	Subjects Currently Teaching	Years in Current Grade	Grades taught in Past	Years as a teacher
Participant 1 (P1)	2	All but music and physical education	1st year	Kindergarten, 1, 2, 4	5 years
Participant 2 (P2)	2	All except music	10th year	2 to 12	21 years
Participant 3 (P3)	5/6 split	All but music	1st year	Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, junior high, high school	30 years
Participant 4 (P4)	2	All but music and physical education	3rd year	Kindergarten, 1, 2, 4, junior high special education	31 years
Participant 5 (P5)	Homeschool facilitator (grades 3-4)	All general subjects	1st year	Kindergarten to grade 12	15 years
Participant 7 (P7)	System Principal	N/A	1st year	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	23 years
Participant 8 (P8)		Language arts, math, health, art	6th year	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	10 years
Participant 9 (P9)	3/4	Numeracy (math), science, faith-based classes, physical education, technology	4th year	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	15 years
Participant 10 (P10)	5	Math, science, health, learning strategies, electives	1st year	4 to 9	8 years
Participant 12 (P12)	Not currently teaching	N/A	N/A	3, 4, 5, 6	11 years
Participant 13 (P13)	1	All but music	1st year	1, 3	4 years
Participant 14 (P14)	6	All	2nd year	Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 6	14 years

school district. P12 was pursuing a graduate degree full-time and not currently teaching. This study recruited teachers who had taught or were currently teaching in grade one to six in Alberta and had taught in at least one classroom with diverse learners; therefore, teachers who had taught in the past, but were not currently teaching, still met eligibility to participate. Notably, these participants did not differ from the other participants, as identified in the New Critical Incident or Factors Tracking Table (Appendix D).

Subjects Currently Teaching

Most teachers taught all subjects apart from specialized classes such as music and physical education. Three teachers taught all subjects except music and physical education, and three teachers taught all subjects except music. One teacher identified as a generalist who taught all classes. Two teachers taught math and science primarily and taught other elective subjects (e.g., physical education, technology, faith-based subjects, health, learning strategies). One teacher taught language arts, math, health, and art, and two teachers were not currently teaching.

Length of Time in Current Grade, Grades Taught in the Past, & Years as a Teacher

Years teaching in their current teaching grade ranged from their first year to ten years. Two teachers were not currently teaching. The participants ranged in the number of grades they had taught in the past. Eleven had taught more than four or more different grade levels in their teaching career, ranging from pre-kindergarten to grade twelve (M = 6.6 grades per teacher), and one had only taught in two grades. The participants' years as a teacher ranged from 4 years to 31. The average number of years as a teacher was 14 years and the median years was 15.

Contextual Data on Inclusive Education

The participants were asked three questions to contextualize the interview; "What does inclusive education mean to you?" "What does a successful inclusive education classroom look

like?" and "How confident do you feel with teaching in an inclusive education classroom on a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident)? Has your confidence changed over the years? If yes, how?" In this section, I will review the results of these three questions.

What does Inclusive Education Mean to You?

Six themes were identified regarding what inclusive education meant to each participant. These included that all children are in one classroom regardless of needs and abilities, meeting student needs, community and belonging, accepted or normal, learning and a quality education, and perspective-based.

All teachers noted that inclusive education meant all students, regardless of any differing abilities and needs, were in one classroom, whether physical, emotional, learning, mental, cultural, socio-economical, medical, or psychological needs or disabilities. While three concepts are apparent in this theme (e.g., "all children," "one classroom," and "needs and abilities"), each concept was presented in the context of each other, therefore making it impossible to tease apart. P7 stated that inclusive education "infers that all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities or special needs, are part of mainstream education. They're included in regular, inclusive classrooms settings, in part of community schools, regardless of what their needs are." This was the most common way teachers described inclusion, with all teachers in the study describing inclusive education in this way. Further, four teachers only described inclusive education in this way, while the remaining eight participants elaborated on their definition.

Five teachers identified that inclusive education meant students were accepted for who they were or were considered normal. P2 described this in the sense that students did not feel "odd." She said, "it's okay to feel different and it's okay to have the difference and to appreciate the difference for everyone, but to feel odd to me is what kills the inclusive." Similarly, P5

emphasized that needs are not special, but rather every need was a need of a human being. In this description, students who were different from their peers were intended to either feel like their needs were normalized in the classroom or that they were accepted for the person they were. Further, four teachers noted that inclusive education meant meeting students' different and specific needs to learn and achieve their potential. P9 mentioned, "everybody's not going to get the same. You're going to get what you need to achieve your potential, whatever that may be."

Three teachers identified that inclusive education meant students belonged to a community that was safe for them. P12 described this in her interview, stating, "The big word that comes to mind for me is the word community... I think that inclusive education is also representative of a larger inclusive society, and that's something [of] a lesson itself." Four teachers identified that inclusive education meant students would learn and receive a quality education by design. P14 noted that teachers "design our classrooms and our schools so that all kids can have a quality education by meeting their needs," identifying that students and teachers are actively involved in the learning process.

One teacher also identified that inclusive education meant different things to different people who were in different roles. P9 mentioned inclusive education depended on "what side of the coin you're kind of coming at it from. Are you a parent? Are you an administrator? Are you a teacher? Are you in some of the fringe groups or groups that are advocating for inclusion?" Her comment identifies that meanings about inclusive education can differ depending on the perspective it is approached.

What does a Successful Inclusive Education Classroom Look Like?

Seven themes were identified in understanding what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like. These included the features of the classroom as a community, features of

the classroom space, everyone participating, student needs are met, support from people, teacher factors, and variation in what it looks like.

The teachers identified several features of the classroom in relation to it as a community and features of the classroom space. The teachers described that a successful inclusive education classroom would look like a small community of students in which students built relationships, were safe, welcomed, and part of a positive environment ready to learn. Notably, P5 mentioned that smaller class sizes were important for a successful inclusive classroom. P7 further described the community of a successful inclusive classroom as "a welcoming environment where all members of the classroom believe that each of the others belongs there."The teachers described the features of a successful inclusive education classroom in terms of the physical classroom, including ensuring appropriate physical materials, such as proper equipment and technology, are available. In her interview, P12 mentioned, "you've got the physical supports for [inclusive education] in terms of the classroom space being equipped for it."

According to the teachers, a successful inclusive education classroom would look like everyone in the classroom participating so that it would be difficult to tell which students had a disability. P9 spoke of this theme as the ideal, noting that this type of classroom would be her and her partner teacher's dream. She described, "if you were to walk in and see, you would just see kids working. You would see kids working on whatever they need to work on, and you wouldn't know that there is anything different going on." Two teachers also discussed a successful inclusive education classroom as a place where students could have their needs met through accommodation and differentiation. P2 stated that each student "will be provided with what they need," while P12 explained that needs would be met through programming and in a way "so that each student is able to gain access to education at their kind of just-right level."

A successful inclusive education classroom also looked like additional support from personnel, including staff in the classroom such as EAs, the integration of specialized services and agencies within and beyond the school, particularly administration, support from parents, and generally learning from the previous staff. Within the classroom, P3 described a successful inclusive education classroom "would look like you have about three extra hands," further elaborating that the consistent support of EAs is ideal. The teachers also described the role of administrators supporting plans in inclusive classrooms as making it successful and having support from a good school team. Parent support was also mentioned by teachers, particularly more parent involvement, more consistent communication between home and school, and parents having realistic expectations. Teachers mentioned integrating services and agencies in successful inclusive classrooms, or as P3 said, "everybody is working on the same page." P10 also noted working from strategies created and used by previous teachers as part of a successful inclusive classroom.

The teachers identified aspects within themselves that contributed to a successful inclusive education classroom, including having a support system, participating in continual training, increasing their knowledge, and ensuring their own self-regulation. P13 mentioned the need for teachers to "understanding what [inclusive education] entails so, knowing how to accommodate and work with whatever kiddos are [in the classroom]."

The teachers discussed the variation of successful inclusive education classrooms, noting that the classroom may look different depending on who the students in the classroom were, what subject was being taught, and student dynamics. While P10 identified that groups of students change year to year, P8 described this in the classroom's sense. She said,

I think there's no one right answer because I think there will be a lot of variation

depending on the kids that you have in your classroom. If you are working with a fairly, I don't know, typical class, you'll probably have a range of abilities, maybe a couple of kids with learning disabilities, probably a few kids who are English language learners, maybe a couple of kids with a mild cognitive delay. So, those kids can usually be working on the same or similar projects and activities all at the same time, but it looks a little bit different when you have a kid with more severe disability where they're not working on graded curriculum.

Confidence Teaching in an Inclusive Education Classroom

Teachers were asked their confidence in teaching in inclusive education classrooms on a scale from 1 to 10 to provide contextual information to support the critical incidents and factors teachers identified. Teacher's overall ratings of their confidence ranged from 1 to 10, but many teachers found it difficult to pinpoint a specific number and gave ranges instead (see Table 2). Based on the numbers provided, teachers' average and median rating was 7. Teachers who provided a range rating were calculated using the average of their range (e.g., P9 rated her confidence between 2 to 7, so her averaged score was 4.5). The teachers were asked whether their confidence had changed over the years and to describe the change from which seven themes were identified. These included increasing from ongoing learning, the influence of teaching experience, personal factors, classroom composition of needs, changes in expectations for teachers, the influence of starting brand new, and the impact of having a community of teachers.

Teachers discussed how their confidence has generally improved due to their ongoing learning and increased knowledge as a teacher. Some teachers discussed graduate degrees, while others mentioned professional development and research as increasing their confidence. For example, P5 mentioned that her "pursuit of outside education" allowed her to think bigger and

Table 2

Participants' Confidence Ratings

Participant	Rating
P1	8
P2	Average 5-6, can fluctuate to 1 based on context
P3	5
P4	8
P5	10
P7	7
P8	Average 8, this year 10
P9	2-7
P10	8
P12	7
P13	7
P14	7-8

not exclusively rely on just her classroom experiences to view inclusive education. Teachers also

identified that their teaching experience improved their confidence in teaching in an inclusive

classroom. P13 described this in her interview, stating, "just overall more experience. This is my

fourth year teaching. Just having more experience with an inclusive setting and all the needs."

The teachers identified personal factors that influenced their confidence, including being

more open-minded and coping emotionally. P12 described her experience in growing

emotionally, stating that while her confidence has not necessarily changed, her "ability to cope

with [inclusive education] on an emotional well-being kind of level" has changed. P14 also

identified a group of other teachers in her master's cohort that helped increase her confidence in

inclusive education. She explained, "I had a cohort of teachers that I could also create a

community, so I think you get more confidence from that if you're around people that really

encourage and believe in inclusive classroom [*sic*]."

The teachers described the effect the classroom composition of needs impacted their

confidence in inclusive education, noting that classrooms with more needs can decrease their

confidence. For example, P8 stated,

This year, I have five students on IPPs. Four of whom have a learning disability and one of whom has a cognitive delay. This year, I'd say a [confidence rating of] 10. It's pretty easy to get everybody on board and doing what they need to do, and they're a little bit older so it's a little bit easier. They can be a little more independent. I've had other years where I would put that as significantly lower because of the level of need that's in my class. So, I don't know. Maybe on average, like an 8.

Two teachers suggested the increased expectations in teaching has decreased their confidence in inclusive classrooms. P7 notes there have been more expectations placed on teachers due to other supports and services being removed, which "has meant that [her] confidence in doing [her] job has gone down." The teachers identified that their confidence decreases when they need to "start brand new" with a student in their classroom who presents with challenges that they have never supported or when they start teaching a new grade level. P9 explained in her interview, "when a new child comes in with whatever sort of challenges they might be dealing with or whatever. I might be at a four with that student because whatever they're dealing with is brand new to me." P14 described a similar experience in switching grades, explaining, "I just switched to grade six last year[s], so I certainly feel more confident I think with the younger kids because—Yeah. You learn it when you switched grades, it's like, oh, you feel like a first-year teacher."

Helping Critical Incidents

After the contextual data was collected, participants were asked what incidents helped in teaching in inclusive classrooms related to the second research question of the project. The participants identified ten categories (see Table 3). This section will review each of the categories and subcategories in depth.

Table 3

Helping Critical Incident Categories

Category	Number of CIs (n)	Participation Rate (%)
Category 1 - Support from People	96	100%
Category 2 - Teacher Knowledge/ Education	38	92%
Category 3 - Open Communication	17	67%
Category 4 - Teachers' Experience	14	50%
Category 5 - Strategies/ Teaching Practices	19	42%
Category 6 - Relationships with Students	13	42%
Category 7 - Teacher Mindset	12	42%
Category 8 - Managing Stress	11	33%
Category 9 - Materials	2	17%
Category 10 - Predictable and Ethical Use of the Budget	4	8%

Category 1. Support from People

The most salient category from the interviews was having support from people. All participants referred to this category, and 96 critical incidents fell under this category. Participants described many different types of support from people. Specifically, teachers described the importance of various types of support (e.g., instructional, emotional, personal, or collaborative) from colleagues, as well as the importance of EA support, the role of supportive principals and administrators, parental support, support from specialists, and support from community partners. There was also an emphasis on the need for people as a resource to support students and give students individualized attention.

Teachers frequently mentioned support from colleagues as instrumental in supporting them in inclusive education. Colleagues include not only other teachers in their schools but also EAs. Participants discussed the support from colleagues through collaboration. Collaboration in this context was viewed as informal conversations that could address professional, instructional, or personal topics.

The teachers described the influence of sharing ideas and learning from one another. P1

described her experience working with diverse staff: "the school I work at now is quite diverse in many different ways. So, I think a lot of their experiences have helped me learn and grow and how to be more inclusive in my classroom." Several participants described this in the context of collaboration to support their students by gaining new ideas when working with students and learning about different disorders and conditions (e.g., dyslexia). Alternatively, collaboration would also help gain new perspectives from people with different characteristics, such as from a male perspective or a different culture. P3 identified that different perspectives created new opportunities to view a situation differently: "my colleague is male so he suggested things from the male perspective that I was like, 'Oh, I hadn't thought of that.' There were also cultural things that I needed to become more aware of with certain students." Without collaboration, P7 mentioned that teaching in an inclusive classroom could feel alienating:

> I think sometimes it feels quite unmanageable to people and when we have small schools where there might be only one grade of something and we—the grade one teacher who has lots of students with special needs might feel as though they don't have anybody that they can tap into or with, or work alongside that can be pretty alienating.

Teachers mentioned the value of having someone to be a sounding board or just have someone to vent to when dealing with challenging circumstances. Colleagues could also manifest as another staff member filling in for them briefly while they took a break to recharge or spend some time caring for a student. Overall, teachers valued colleagues' support through collaboration and discussed the benefits of approaching inclusive education from a team approach. Teachers identified that this type of support from their colleagues influenced their teaching and fostered professional growth, impacting their students. Further, this type of support helped teachers feel supported in their implementation of inclusive education.

Teachers identified that having a principal or school administrator who is supportive of inclusive education and teachers is instrumental. Participants noted that having a supportive principal or school administrator helped them be more effective in their classroom and reduced their stress levels, created a feeling of investment in their school, and helped them feel heard. A supportive principal or school administrator provided direction and helped teachers and empower them while also providing support during challenging times. For example, P13 described a scenario in which her principal encouraged her to maintain her efforts with a student:

A lot of the time too with some of the issues that we have in the classroom, there's not much you can do about it. It's a matter of it takes time for the kids to learn the routine or to learn the skills that they need to and to just have that ability to...coaching through like it's going to be okay. You're doing okay, you're doing what you need to.

Teachers also discussed principals or school administrators not just supporting but also understanding the realities of inclusive classrooms and having reasonable expectations of their teachers. Teachers also felt it was important for principals or school administrators to have a good relationship with students and parents.

Specialists and community supports, including agencies, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, and consultants, were identified as personnel that support inclusive education. Teachers identified that specialists supported by providing information on their area of expertise. As P7 said, "We can't all be experts in everything. So we rely heavily on being able to tap into district expertise on pretty much everything and anything." This type of support provided teachers with more information and created opportunities for specialists to share their strategies that have been effective with specific students.

Participants also referred to community services, such as offering wraparound care for

students. While these supports are not brought into the school itself, P7 mentioned, "the people often associated with the supports will work with the school to coordinate so that… the needs are being met as best as best possible without being redundant." As mentioned by P5, much of this type of support surrounded communication (which will be further discussed in the open communication category). This type of communication was dual-focused, in that schools could provide and receive information to ensure services were all working together.

Support, specifically from EAs, was mentioned by participants. EAs were often viewed as part of the team by teachers, and they aided in coming up with ideas to support students. P10 mentioned times when she brainstormed with her EA on ways to support a student, and the EA came up with an idea and created the material for the student to be used the next day. EAs provided valuable support in being a scribe or a reader for students or, in general, providing additional support for students who struggled to access the academic content.

Teachers also mentioned how EAs supported individual students with medical, emotional, and behavioural concerns. For example, P3 described how necessary EAs were in supporting her students when one student had a seizure during class. She went on to explain the value of EAs with students who have behavioural challenges:

> In my case this year, when that student has gone off the rails, the EA has been able to
> take either the class or that student into another environment to try to regulate them, help
> them regulate. Without that, my teaching stops and rest of the class loses out on
> instructional time. There is no other, you can't sugar coat it. It affects every single child
> in that class if you don't have that support.

EAs supported teachers in providing students with individualized support and supporting other students in the classroom. P3 emphasized the benefit of having another adult in the room and the

consequences of not having that level of support readily available:

> You're dealing with trying to get that child out of the room, you're dealing with trying to call admin, you're dealing with what are the rest of the kids doing. It could mean 20, 30 minutes a day. That's a lot of instructional minutes.

Not only is instructional time lost, but other students in the classroom miss out on time with their teacher. Further, having an additional adult in the room can help ensure the classroom runs smoothly as it provides another set of eyes to notice students who may need additional support.

Supporting many students with exceptionalities also impacted teachers. Many teachers mentioned the value of EAs in supporting their own emotions, particularly in helping them feel effective in teaching an inclusive classroom. P8 described the support from EAs as helping her feel like she was doing a good job as a teacher, she said: "if you know that kids need help and you just don't have the means to provide them the help, you feel like you're not doing a great job." Overall, teachers described EAs as an invaluable resource that helps them in teaching a classroom of diverse students with individualized needs.

Support from parents helped in inclusive education. Specifically, teachers mentioned the benefits of working collaboratively with parents, such as parents being willing to work on academic tasks at home and share information with teachers. Many teachers emphasized the importance of having families provide support to their child at home to ensure consistency. P12 mentioned, "it sometimes feels like you're hitting a wall because if students don't have that consistency, it doesn't feel like they're moving much forward." Teachers discussed parents having realistic expectations and acknowledging their child may need additional support. P3 described when two parents disagreed on their child's diagnosis and subsequent use of medications, which she felt prevented them from making gains in school. Similarly, P4

mentioned the importance of parents "having an idea of where their child's really at...that they do not expect miracles, … but they have a sense where their child might be out in terms of their disability."

Participants described the importance of having individual time with students throughout the day, facilitated by having support from people. Specifically, individual time with students helped foster more meaningful connections and created better opportunities to support students' learning. P13 described the meaningful connection aspect in her interview, stating, "there's a lot of kids who are missing that connection piece and there's only one adult in the room, it just makes things so tricky." Similarly, P8 described her experience in having to decide which students to prioritize in her classroom:

> Just getting to kids, right? If I'm circulating while we're doing an activity, I maybe have
> a chance of checking in with every single kid if I have 20 as oppose to if I have 30, right?
> If you have 30, you have to pick and choose. Typically, in my experience, the kids who
> have the greatest needs, I'll visit first, and they'll get the most of my time and,
> unfortunately, that leaves all of the other, I guess, more typical kids who might still need
> help and might still need my support without access to that…We know that small group
> and one-on-one time with the teacher is really effective for student learning and you just
> can't make that happen often enough when you have a very large class.

Other participants echoed P8's statements, noting that each student gets individualized attention and support to help them in their learning with additional people in the classroom.

Category 2. Teacher Knowledge/Education

The second most commonly referred to category was teacher knowledge or education. Eleven participants referred to this category in their interview, and a total of 45 critical incidents

fell under this category. Teachers emphasized the need to continually seek out more knowledge and education. For example, P5 stated:

> Education, always seeking more education. Always, always, always. So, I never go more than two years in a row without attending a major course or a major conference. I think that's an absolute requirement. You cannot work in a world moving this fast without continuing your education.

Teachers discussed the importance of their knowledge and education on how to educate students in inclusive classrooms. They discussed their desire to learn, their knowledge about disabilities and about their students themselves, as well as where they have obtained their knowledge (e.g., university education, professional development, research, and mentoring from others).

Teachers described how professional development opportunities, such as attending conferences, participating in district-supported sessions, and professional learning communities, have helped them teach in inclusive classrooms. These opportunities helped teachers improve their practice by learning about new strategies, increased their knowledge about resources and tools, increased their knowledge about particular disorders, and improved their confidence in teaching in inclusive classrooms. The teachers described the benefit of having readily available professional development opportunities during the school year instead of just in the summer has particularly been helpful. Similarly, teachers have found that flexibility and choice in the type of professional development allow them to select opportunities to meet their students' needs.

Reviewing research was another source of knowledge and education for participants. According to the teachers, research referred to inclusive education strategies and topics and specific disabilities and environmental impacts (e.g., trauma), although it is unclear where they obtained their sources. In reviewing research, teachers mentioned that it helps keep them current

on new information. As P7 said, "you can't just read it and know it. You read, you implement, you revise, you read." Reviewing research helped teachers prepare to handle students who entered their classroom with a pattern of behaviour or functioning level that they had never experienced before. For example, P9 described her experience:

> I had a little girl a couple years ago that had a syndrome…She was born with something that was very rare, and I've never heard of it. And so I did a lot of research because I was getting a lot of information from her parents about things she can't do…So then I had to do a lot of like research, research where I was like clinically looking for like studies on these kids and what they could or could not do.

Other participants echoed similar sentiments, including P10, who described her experience researching dyslexia to understand how new students in her class learned. Overall, participants found reviewing research increased their knowledge and about how to support students in their inclusive education classroom.

Teachers discussed the role of universities in supporting their knowledge in inclusive classrooms. P4, P14, and P5 discussed their teacher education training programs as sources of knowledge. These participants noted that their education programs were different from other programs in that they either had an entire program focus on inclusive education or a specialization option in special education. Other participants discussed their actions in taking additional university courses or entire programs to continue to learn. Education in their teacher education training programs on inclusive education or special education was identified as providing a base for supporting and creating programming for students with specific disabilities or disorders. In contrast, continued education from universities was identified to learn more information about these areas.

A few participants also reported that mentoring from others was another way they obtained knowledge. This differed from traditional professional development as mentoring was much more involved and ongoing. Mentoring was provided not just by other teachers but also by specialists. P14 noted: "I was lucky my first year of teaching, I met some incredible [people], like a speech and language pathologist, OT [occupational therapist], a teacher, and they just totally took me under their wing." Other participants described opportunities to be mentored and observe their mentors' classrooms as invaluable to "see exemplary practice in real time," as P7 said, as well as view inclusive classrooms from a different perspective.

Teachers also mentioned that gaining more knowledge about their students was helpful in inclusive classrooms. Like reviewing research, teachers mentioned how helpful it was to review specific students' documents to learn more about them. P9 described one situation in which a parent requested a meeting to discuss their child. She said:

> [The parent] brought a binder in about her son, and it had all information about him, like his story from birth and what [was] easy for him. And I got to know him really just even through that. And it kind of gave me a starting point for him and his family.

P10 also discussed the benefits of understanding her students to be able to "meet students where they are at and building upon their previous knowledge and passions." Overall, the teachers noted that documents were a starting point, but getting to know their students in the classroom was the most helpful.

Category 3. Open Communication

Over half of the participants discussed the helpfulness of having open communication. Teachers discussed the importance of having open communication with school staff, parents, and community supports when teaching in inclusive classrooms. A total of 17 critical incidents fell

under this category from 67% of participants.

Half (50%) of the participants discussed how helpful having open communications with parents is in inclusive education in 10 critical incidents. The teachers discussed the importance of parents being willing to share information about their child with the school, including medical or therapy reports, to even histories of sexual abuse. In knowing this information, teachers are better able to understand their students. P3 discussed this in her interview: "We need to know these things because kids will react to certain situations. They could react to what we seem to think is perfectly harmless video, and they could have a reaction to it. So, knowledge is power." Further, teachers found it was important to have conversations with parents to get an understanding of their goals for the student. As P9 discussed, "some parents are like totally academic. Others are social. They… could care less if the kid learns to read as long as he has a friend." One participant also referred to open communication as having trusting relationships that parents could reach out to the teacher to answer any questions. Open communication with parents, in turn, sets the student up for success as there is consistency between home and school, and the school can make decisions with critical information that is shared.

Like the importance of having open communication with parents, it was also important for teachers to have open communication with their school staff, such as EAs, consultants, and principals. Six critical incidents emerged from the interviews from 33% of the participants. For example, P4 explained the importance of clearly communicating with EAs what their role in a task was to ensure students are supported appropriately. P12 discussed having open communication with principals to ensure they knew what was going on in the classroom, which, in turn, helped them make more informed choices in supporting inclusive education. P14 also discussed the importance of open communication with the whole staff in terms of staff members

using the same language to communicate for inclusive education and when using specific strategies like calming rooms.

In her interview, P5 had mentioned the usefulness of community supports, which was already discussed under support from people; however, she also discussed the role of open communication with these community supports. Specifically, she said:

> Wraparound support [from community providers] is mostly communication; a lot of it's just open communication. Whether you can send your own observations or support to a doctor. At my school, we actually go to doctor appointments to support parents. Psychologists or psychiatrists, occupational therapy, feeding therapy, whatever it is, just being able to have access to that knowledge. Not everybody can carry everything around inside their head. The library is only so big.

Like what was mentioned under open communication with parents, having this information from community supports helps teachers be more effective in their jobs by knowing more specific information to help teach the students in inclusive classrooms.

Category 4. Teachers' Experience

Half of the participants discussed how previous experience, both inside and outside teaching, including their own children, helps them in teaching in inclusive classrooms. A total of 13 critical incidents fell under this category. A third of the teachers described how their experiences working in different schools, different grades, and with different students have helped them teach in inclusive classrooms. P1 mentioned in her interview, "the more experience you have I find, the easier it is to be more inclusive and to learn other ways of including kids with different needs." P13 echoed this statement and explained that having experience in tryingout strategies that have worked for her teaching style has been one of the biggest

influences on her teaching in inclusive classrooms. Similarly, P4 mentioned that her experience in working with EAs has helped her understand the role of EAs to support students.

P2 identified that her own children's experience in inclusive education classrooms has helped her teach her students. She explained, "personal experience definitely, being a mom or having kids that...had needs definitely helped" her to have more compassion for parents, which she felt supported her implementation of inclusive education. Specifically, she felt that this experience helped her connect to her parents and learn how the student was being supported at home to better support the student at school.

In her interview, P12 discussed that her experience in working in a residential treatment facility as a Child and Youth Care worker had helped her in inclusive education. She described her experience in learning specific strategies, such as non-violent crisis intervention, and how that has helped her in her current role as a teacher. The experiences were helpful when she became a teacher, as they were another source of education. As she mentioned, "I feel like I got three years of extra training [on] special needs doing that."

Category 5. Strategies/ Teaching Practices

Teachers discussed specific strategies or teaching practices to support students when considering what has helped them in inclusive education. Nineteen critical incidents fell under this category, and just under half (42%) of the participants contributed to this category. Many participants discussed specific strategies they use in their classrooms that help them in inclusive education. For example, P10 described her strategies, including linking concepts together (e.g., if a student knows 2x3=6, you build on that to do 2x6), using manipulatives, providing students time to think, having opportunities for students to get out of their seats to learn, teaching in creative and engaging ways, and being animated in her teaching. P12 described the benefit of

being creative in her class scheduling to ensure she could support students who needed additional support. She said,

> Doing the art thing was a bit of an aha moment for me, just because I felt like that was something students didn't need as much one on one time with but math they did. So, we only had art once a week. During that day, I would have my students who were more than three grades below grade level, I would have them do art while I taught the rest of the class who was within three grades, and then I'd switch it.

Other participants described the benefits of project-based learning, students being involved in planning their own lessons, pairing students with younger students in the school as a leadership role, modifying tasks for students, using structured lessons to curb student behaviour, and learning through trial and errors. Participants also mentioned that they liked to ensure all students could benefit from these strategies.

Category 6. Relationships with Students

In their interviews, teachers discussed the importance of relationships with students. Specifically, they discussed this in the context of building and maintaining a relationship with students in inclusive education and the importance of helping students build confidence and resiliency to help them be successful. A total of 13 critical incidents fell under this category, and 42% of participants contributed to this category.

Teachers described their efforts in taking the time to build relationships with their students, which ultimately helped them in teaching their inclusive classrooms in 8 critical incidents. As P13 said,

> What works for me is the relationship piece. I think that's a strategy for making inclusive work and I think in any classroom, it's just building relationship with the kids. I think,

that's a piece that gets placed over a lot in education just because we're focused on the

end goal of this is what needs to be learned in this time frame especially over time to

putting more weight in understanding how much building relationship with my students

makes a difference for everything else.

Other participants discussed attempting to create relationships early and with all students in the

school by talking to students during recess or through extracurricular activities.

Further to creating relationships, teachers also discussed the importance of fostering

resiliency and confidence in their students in 5 critical incidents. P10 mentioned, "making them

feel confident and comfortable to ask for help" linked back to the relationship and trust she had

built with her students, which helped them view learning as a team effort. P2 mentioned the

importance of acknowledging obstacles and teaching students how to react and how to take build

students' confidence to continue to try. Overall, the relationship created with students was a

cornerstone to helping them feel confident in their learning.

Category 7. Teacher Mindset

Teachers discussed how their mindset impacted inclusive education, including having the

"right mindset" (e.g., accepting feedback), an "open mindset," and a general awareness that, as a

teacher, you will not reach every student. Twelve critical incidents fell under this category, with

42% of participants contributing to this category.

In her interview, P5 talked about the importance of having the right mindset in inclusive

education, which she described as a mindset accepting feedback and willingness to try when

faced with challenges. Other aspects of having the right mindset mentioned by participants

included having a positive outlook on challenging situations and viewing needs in the classroom

as student needs instead of special needs. Teachers also discussed the importance of being open-

minded. Open-mindedness was discussed in the context of being open-minded to services and supports that were available, different teaching practices, being flexible, and being willing to work as a team. In her interview, P9 emphasized the shift when she moved into a team approach and further emphasized that giving up some level of control over her classroom and being willing to work alongside another teacher helped strengthen her teaching. P12 described realizing she, as one teacher, could not reach all of her students. She said,

> What I recognized too is I can't reach every kid, and that took a long time to learn.
> Probably five years into teaching that if I can't reach every kid I can recognize, what kids need that other teachers might have the gifts to be able to do.

P12 emphasized her mindset shift was not a way to deflect responsibility but to shift her mindset in viewing herself as connecting students to resources rather than meeting all of the students' needs independently. This realization was a big "weight off [her] shoulders" and helped ensure all students had the opportunities to create connections, even if they were not always with her.

Category 8. Managing Stress

A third (33%) of the participants discussed the importance of managing their own stress personally and at the school level. Eleven critical incidents fell under this category and fell under this category. Participants discussed the importance of managing stress both at a personal and school level. In their interviews, the teachers talked about the need to be calm and support their students. P10 described the impact her own management of stress has on her students:

> If I'm anxious, I can see it in the class. I can see them all getting a little… huh. And when you're in that state of mind, you can actually can't accomplish anything. So I recognizing that my actions and my emotions are, they're feeding off of it that like it's in those moments. But you have to be able to recognize that that you yourself are in a state that

you need to actually calm down, and everybody needs to take a break.

P5 discussed the importance of activities outside of school, emphasizing the need to put schoolwork aside to engage in self-care:

> When you feel like you have so many jobs from lesson planning to writing IPPs, we have tons of other plans that we have to write and stuff. When it feels like you have to take that home with you every night, then you can't necessarily get past that. It's okay to have Netflix and chill. It's okay to go to the gym. It's okay to spend time with people who lift you up and support you and make you happy because you feel like you're in chasing the almighty paycheck all the time. But then you have to manage your own stress levels.

Overall, managing stress levels was identified as an area that was helpful in inclusive education.

While teachers identified the need to manage their stress personally, they also mentioned actions taken in schools to help them manage their stress more effectively. Two teachers mentioned specific school strategies intended to help them manage stress, including regular potlucks to ensure teachers had a lunch to eat, a tap-out system in which staff will be briefly rearranged to give a teacher a few minutes to reset during the school day, and collaboration time to plan which helped teachers breathe and take a step back to see the bigger picture. As P12 said in her interview, "If you can make the teacher's life easier in other ways, you can make inclusive education better" by ensuring teachers feel recharged to support their students.

Category 9. Materials

Two teachers identified that having physical materials helped support inclusive education classrooms. The two teachers identified two critical incidents that fell under this category. Specifically, they discussed the importance of materials such as proper tables for students with physical disabilities, materials to build a sensory room, and even something as simple as food to

ensure students are not hungry.

Category 10. Predictable and Ethical Use of the Budget

One participant mentioned the importance of schools having predictable budgets distributed to schools and students in an ethical manner. P5 explained that budgets needed to be managed ethically, meaning the funding should be dispersed for their intended purpose, which in her experience, had not consistently occurred. She expanded to say that while the focus of much of the funding is on meeting student needs, the lack of accountability for monitoring student need creates questionable practices. In terms of predictability, P5 described the influence of a predictable budget on teachers:

> It just reduces stress in the system, increases predictability, which makes your classroom run better, which makes seeking outside partnerships work better; because now, you know exactly what you need to ask for from FSCD [Family Support for Children with Disabilities]. Or now, you know exactly which areas if you want extra support behaviour consultants, that kind of thing, that's not through FSCD.

Overall, she described the importance of ensuring budgets were predictable to support the allocation of funds and ethical to ensure the funds were used appropriately.

Hindering Critical Incidents

Participants were asked to identify factors that hindered their implementation of inclusive education. Eleven categories emerged from the data. Table 4 provides an overview of the categories identified, the corresponding participation rates, and the number of critical incidents identified in that category.

Category 1. Lack of Resources

The most commonly referred to hindering category was the lack of resources. Seventy-

five percent of the teachers interviewed identified this area as impacting them, and 25 critical

incidents fell under this category. Teachers discussed the impact of the lack of resources, often

due to inadequate funding, on implementing inclusive education. Specifically, the lack of access

to technology, the lack of physical resources in the classroom, insufficient training, and the lack

of specialized staff hindered implementation. In addition, teachers discussed the impact of the

mismanagement of money at the school and board level.

Table 4

Hindering Critical Incident Categories

Category	Number of CIs (n)	Participation Rate (%)
Category 1 - Lack of Resources	25	75%
Category 2 - Challenges with Class Composition	33	67%
Category 3 - Challenges with EA Support	19	67%
Category 4 - Lack of Time	7	42%
Category 5 - Challenges with Therapy Teams	10	33%
Category 6 - Challenges with Principal Involvement	6	33%
Category 7 - Challenges with Staff Group	8	25%
Category 8 - Challenges with Teachers in Multiple Roles	7	25%
Category 9 - Challenges with Societal Pressures	5	25%
Category 10 - Waiting and Patching for Services	8	17%
Category 11 - Challenges with Standardized Testing	2	8%

Teachers discussed how the lack of specialized support staff, such as occupational

therapists, speech and language pathologists, social workers, mental health therapists,

psychologists, and academic area specialists, has impacted inclusive education. P9 described

how in her beginning years as a teacher, there were more specialists in schools, but these were

removed around the same time the inclusive education movement began. She said:

So there was no pull-outs [*sic*], but the support wasn't added. So while these kids were

leaving to go get kind of what they needed from someone else from like a specialist, that

specialist was taken away and they were put in our rooms, but we weren't given the

supports that they were being given at that time. Right. So I feel like that's a big missing component in our inclusive education and not necessarily that the kids are taken out and not with their peers, but just that the scaffolding and support isn't there for them and us. Without this level of support from specialists, teachers are impacted as they have to fill in the gaps. In her interview, P2 described the impact of teachers filling in for specialists as potentially harmful to students. She said:

I might hurt more than I do good because, and again, with the best intention. There's so many [*sic*] stuff that we do because of lack of knowledge or human resources around us, we are probably doing more hurt than good without wanting to do it or without even knowing.

Further to this point, P8 suggested that some may have more training in specific programs, such as speech programs, which creates inconsistency in programming and a luck of the draw situation. Ultimately, teachers emphasized that without the support from specialized staff, students suffer. P8 discussed this impact in her interview, stating, "especially for kids with really serious disabilities or severe disabilities. We're not talking just about their ability to succeed in school. This is a quality of life issue."

A few teachers mentioned the impact that the lack of physical resources had on inclusive education. Specifically, teachers mentioned tools such as pencil grips or tools recommended by a specialist, such as coloured transparencies. While some teachers mentioned that parents have to pay often out-of-pocket for resources, others mentioned spending their own money and using their own time to research, find, and buy resources for their students. P4 noted that the limited availability of technology impacted her teaching in inclusive education. She mentioned the impact of lack of technology access, such as limited access to apps that made the iPads she did

have less useful for the classroom and lack of training for students in using the technology.

Two teachers mentioned insufficient funds allocated to training for teachers as hindering. Specifically, P2 mentioned concerns surrounding the inability to attend training on specific psychological, emotional, or medical conditions that students in her class have due to inadequate funding. She noted this negatively impacts her knowledge and skill in supporting her students. Similarly, P3 mentioned that "there is no money unless you access your own PD funds," alluding to the possibility of having funding through different organizations such as the Alberta Teacher's Association. However, she also mentioned that not everyone accesses these funding sources.

P5 discussed concerns surrounding the impact of mismanagement of money. She discussed concerns with superintendents' high salaries, noting that the money could be reallocated to support students and concerns with different government services not working together. P5 expressed concern about entire "special education budgets" being allocated to buying a new classroom set of laptops instead of using the funds to support students in inclusive education directly.

Category 2. Challenges with Class Composition

Teachers discussed how the composition of the class, specifically the number of students, the diversity of students, and the needs of students in a classroom, impact inclusive classrooms. In addition, teachers identified that when a teacher can manage complex class compositions, they are often given more complex and diverse students in the future. A total of 32 critical incidents fell under this category from 67% of participants.

Teachers identified that class size and diversity impacted inclusive education classrooms interacted with each other. Over half (67%) of the teachers identified that the diversity in their inclusive classrooms was challenging. The teachers identified that the number of students with

exceptionalities and their needs have increased over their time as a teacher, with one teacher

noted functioning varied up to seven grade levels. P8 noted:

> I have noticed an increase in the variety of needs and the number of needs where it used
>
> to be common to have one or two kids in your class with an IPP. Now, it's like five or six
>
> is the norm.

The teachers spoke about the constant feeling of needing to prioritize and triage student learning

needs in the classroom. Teachers' emphasis was that the increased number of students with

special needs was not matched with an increased level of support. P7 described her experience in

prioritizing a student who required significant support:

> [This child was] perfect for full inclusion but again, perfect if you had the support, but the
>
> perception of that support is not the same as the reality of the support, which is that
>
> support came at the cost of the 20 other kids who also should be getting some support,
>
> but now get none because that kid took it all.

Feeling like they needed to prioritize some students' needs over the needs of others has greatly

impacted these teachers. They often question their teaching ability, and their confidence in

teaching suffered as a result. P12 described her experience as a constant battle between which

student she would sacrifice and that impacted her:

> It was one of the reasons I considered leaving teaching, to be honest. Just because you
>
> always felt like you had to decide each day which student to sacrifice. Which ones do I
>
> have the energy to plan and reach to for today and which ones are going to slip between
>
> the cracks? It was just triaging constantly. I went home never feeling like I did every
>
> student justice even though I'd worked my hardest.

Other teachers noted the rise in medical leaves as a result of stress or injury and the impact of

divided attention on students.

Teaching many students with such a range of functioning was challenging, but teachers tried to develop solutions. P12 described her school's attempt to do "grade-level groupings" for math and language arts one year. Although she found it relieving only having to plan for two grade levels, she described it as a "logistical nightmare." She said,

> [The groupings were] supposed to relieve us for time and planning, but the coordination ate up more of our other time. So, the time I would have been spent planning by myself was now trying to coordinate with six other teachers who all have different schedules. So, logistics can be a big one.

Teachers identified that they were trying their best to support students in their inclusive classrooms but that it is challenging due to the level of diversity. As P7 mentioned, "[teachers] care, and they absolutely want what's best for these kids, and they just don't have any more to give, and there's no more support to give the teacher, and you watch people crack."

Similarly, class size was noted as something that hinders the implementation of inclusive education. They mentioned that with the increased number of students in their classrooms, they found it challenging to check in with students. Further, the organization of a large group of students was time-consuming and challenging to navigate at times. One of the challenges P14 had concerned using multiple methods of engagement with a large group. She said,

> There are certain things like class discussions or you know if a student is slowly explaining something for five minutes where you're going to lose the other 30 kids. Right? So, then so like there's that whole classroom management side of it, and then the engagement part.

She also discussed her concerns with the noise level, noting that once the teacher and the EAs are

included, she would often have close to 40 people in her classroom. Similar to class size, teachers also described their challenges with the physical space in their classrooms. Using teaching strategies such as working in small groups, having breakout groups, or even working on special projects is often not feasible due to the classroom's small space.

The teachers also mentioned concerns surrounding the combination of large class sizes with an increased level of diversity of student needs. P4 described her experience in a large, diverse classroom and noted that she often had to rely on stronger students to help support weaker students during lessons so that she could support a small group. Multiple teachers noted the impact of feeling spread thin caused them to feel "inadequate," "like a failure," and generally overwhelmed in their classrooms. Beyond their personal feelings, teachers do not feel as though they are adequately educating their students. As P3 said,

> You feel for the most part you're reaching the most kids. I know especially in regular program there, you got 30 kids. Ten of them might be learning below then you [have] another three or four [with higher needs that need to be addressed with] that inclusive piece. Half the class is needing you extra, and you have no time to give it.

A quarter of teachers (25%) also reflected on their experiences when they had had concerns about whether the inclusive classroom was the best possible setting for some of their students. P3 discussed her experience in having a student who, due to medical concerns, functioned at a level significantly below her age:

> You're asking this child to do the expectation of a ten-year-old when their level is of a six-year-old. And you're not in that child mind, you don't know if that child, "Wow, look at these other people and everything they can do and I can't." I don't know, we don't know. That's a very difficult inclusive Ed piece for me. I deal with more behaviour and

ADHD. This is medical and we're seeing more and more of that, children that need toilet

training and diaper changes and they just lay on the floor.

These teachers did not oppose inclusive education but rather questioned how supportive

inclusive classrooms were for students with exceptionalities. As P13 noted, "I see the benefits of

them being in an inclusive classroom, but I can't give them what they actually need so maybe

inclusive isn't what's best for them." P7 echoed a similar sentiment stating,

I think that the pendulum has swung so far to, oh, yes, we can meet everyone's needs in

an inclusive classroom, and that is true if we have enough support but the problem is we

don't have that level of support. So not everybody's needs can be met.

Overall, these teachers emphasized that the concept of inclusive education and the realities of the

support provided in the classroom may not create the best environment for students.

With increased numbers of students with learning needs in their classrooms, teachers

have had access to increased training, but as P12 said, "with that training comes a lot more

responsibilities." Specifically, she mentioned the responsibilities often looked like having more

expectations put on her than her colleagues. These extra responsibilities and expectations

reinforced that P12 would be the person to "deal with" specific students, which ended up being

quite draining. While P12 appreciated the additional training, her skill and knowledge in

supporting specific students would often encourage administrators to include more of these

students in her classroom, creating a greater level of diversity and complexity of student needs.

Category 3. Challenges with EA Support

Teachers discussed their challenges associated with EA support. Specifically, they

discussed challenges with having less EA support and having fewer competent or adequately

trained EAs. They also discussed the hindrance of EAs doing too much for students. Teachers

also mentioned the concerns surrounding EAs not being paid sufficiently for the work they do. A total of 19 critical incidents fell under this category from 67% of the participants.

Over half of teachers (58%) had concerns surrounding the challenges associated with having less EA support in their inclusive classrooms. One teacher described the inconsistency in having time with an EA, noting that her EA would often be sent to manage concerns with other students in the school, which would take away her already scarce EA time. Further, teachers identified that connecting with EAs about the students they had worked with was challenging as the EAs often worked in multiple classrooms. This created challenges in communication about the level of independence of students.

As mentioned in the helping critical incidents, EA support was found to be a core component of what helps in teaching in an inclusive classroom. Without EA support, teachers discussed their safety concerns with having only one adult in the classroom. Teachers referred to their concerns about this as a "numbers issue" in that with large class sizes and increased complexity of student needs having an "extra set of eyes" helped them support their students. P13 spoke about how the lack of EA support made her more inclusive by recognizing that she could often use strategies for all students in her classroom, but it also created challenges in meeting student needs. Without EA support, teachers did not feel like they could adequately meet their students' educational needs, let alone concerns about student safety and security. This created feelings of exhaustion. As P13 said, the lack of EA support "was also a struggle because I thought I wasn't able to do things to the best of my ability because I thought I was being bogged down with how to reach all the kids."

Teachers discussed concerns surrounding having EAs who were less competent or not trained. Specifically, P9 noted concerns with EA education, noting that schools need educated

EAs to support student learning, while volunteers or less educated EA are useful in more organizational roles. P7 noted her school board classifies EAs differently based on whether they are supporting student learning or assisting with general classroom tasks. P8 also noted challenges when EAs were moved to classrooms to support students, and they did not have any of the necessary training. In her experience, EAs were often moved to support increasing needs in certain areas, but they did not have the skills to support the students. She explained:

> Kids just aren't getting the support that they need if people aren't trained to help them, right? If you are visually impaired, and the person supporting you doesn't know how to read the braille or create documents in braille, how are they going to teach you how to read braille, you know? Just, it doesn't work. People need training.

P4 also noted concerns with EAs doing too much for students, despite explaining the expectations and interfering with student skill development and independence.

P9 also identified that EAs with limited training or competence might be linked to their compensation. She mentioned there are few, if any, incentives for EAs to take additional training or courses as they would have to pay for it out of pocket, and it would not increase their pay or provide them additional job security. P9 felt there was often the perception of "well if you love the kids, you'll do it" for EAs. She described this as unfair, noting this is not said "to the nurses or doctors like, look, take an overtime shift and not get paid if you love your patients." Overall, P9 found this lack of monetary value for educated EAs was a hindrance to inclusive education as it did not encourage EAs to seek out additional education and did not show their value.

Category 4. Lack of Time

Forty-two percent of teachers discussed challenges with the lack of time in inclusive classrooms, and seven critical incidents fell under this category. The teachers identified that they

often need to use their personal time to complete tasks for their classroom. As P10 noted,

> You end up using a lot of your own personal time because you don't have time during the
> day. So like it's scheduling those extra meetings after school or going home and putting
> some thought into it and doing a little bit of research, seeing come back the next day with
> some strategies.

Teachers also noted concerns with a lack of time to check in with students. As mentioned in other categories, this created feelings of being overwhelmed and feeling they were inadequately supporting students.

Category 5. Challenges with Therapy Teams

Teachers discussed the challenges with decreased access to therapy teams and the challenges associated with therapy team recommendations (e.g., recommendations that do not consider the child in the context of the classroom needs). Ten critical incidents fell under this category from four participants. Specifically, teachers identified concerns with the lack of access to therapy teams, such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, and psychologists. Teachers described these services often being triaged due to lack of availability of services. As P2 noted,

> We end up that the biggest cases are taken first, and then those kids that are just weak but
> not weak enough don't get the help. The kids that are struggling but not struggling
> enough don't get the help. It's just the ones that are just in-between that could need a push
> but they will never get that push because unless they have a parent that advocates for
> them really hard or a teacher that is really dedicated.

Some teachers noted decreased staffing trends for therapy teams. P7 discussed the impact of this in her interview, stating, "there's been a decrease in confidence as supports and services got more

slim [*sic*] over time and as things were pulled away. So decreasing support staff has meant that my confidence in my doing my job has gone down."

P13 also noted concerns about the usefulness of recommendations provided to teachers from therapy teams. Specifically, she had concerns about recommendations being provided that did not consider the classroom's entire context. She said,

Being given strategies that really aren't realistic for the room or you can't necessarily implement them because when obviously they have intentions of "Okay, this is how you can help this kiddo who's having issues." But not considering the fact that there are 20 some other kids but also maybe three or four of them are also having the different struggles that need attention.

She went on to say that many of the recommendations would be effective in classrooms that had one to two students who required additional support, but her classrooms had many more students, which made these recommendations ineffective. She noted, often, the recommendations came from ideal practices for inclusive education but did not reflect the reality of her classroom.

Category 6. Challenges with Principal Involvement

Teachers noted the absence of the principal's emotional support (e.g., a "get over it" approach) negatively impacted their implementation of inclusive education. Further, their inappropriate or inadequate involvement in inclusive education (e.g., micromanaging or being "elusive") and principals with limited knowledge of current research impacts inclusive classrooms. Six critical incidents fell under this category from 33% of the participants.

The teachers described incidents when their principals either had inappropriate or inadequate involvement during specific scenarios. For example, P14 and P12 experienced challenges with hard-to-reach principals. Specifically, they both described scenarios in which

their principals should have become involved to have challenging conversations with family, but the principals refused to become involved. All three teachers described these experiences' impact as stressful and noted that it impacted them in the classroom.

P4 and P5 noted concerns surrounding principals who provided limited emotional support in understanding the stress that their staff was constantly under. P4 described this as "feeling left out on your own." She elaborated to provide a specific example in which a principal said, "'Oh, what is the problem? You have got 10 IPP and two students who barely speak English' and [they are] like 'Get over it. You are a teacher.'" P5 also mentioned the challenge when principals do not acknowledge stress experienced by teachers when the principals themselves would not view the situation as stressful. Both teachers described these experiences as making them feel unsupported when implementing inclusive education.

P5 also noted concerns with principals who were not staying up to date on research. She mentioned their lack of understanding of current research on best practices impacted the way they supported the school's staff and students. In her experience, this caused teachers to advocate for their students for general participation in educational experiences such as field trips.

Category 7. Challenges with Staff Group

Teachers discussed how staff at their school could hinder inclusive education in terms of not communicating effectively due to differences in language or terminology, the challenges associated with different teaching styles, and other teachers having negative attitudes or biases towards students. Twenty-five percent of the participants noted concerns in this category, and eight critical incidents fell under this category.

Two teachers noted challenges they have experienced with different teaching styles, specifically, teaching styles that are not effective. P1 explains, "mindsets of an older style of

learning with other teachers and staff members, where they think there's one way to teach them and every student should … learn that way." This mindset makes it challenging for teachers to plan and work on grade-level teams to support students in inclusive education as there tends to be differing foundational opinions, which subsequently creates tension.

P5 discussed challenges with staff not "speaking the same language," which she described as the words that are said and the meaning of the words. P5 gave the example of the word "awful," which can be interpreted differently based on someone's context, background, or philosophy. Speaking the same language meant having quantifiable descriptions or shared definitions to ensure everyone has the same picture of "awful." Not speaking the same language created more stress because "if you don't speak the same language and you don't realize you're advocating for the same thing or something similar, it's harder to join forces to advocate."

P14 discussed challenges with other staff members having negative attitudes or biases in inclusive education. She spoke about the negative attitudes some staff may have about their jobs, which extended to their work with students who had challenging behaviours or other special needs. P14 described a specific scenario in which an EA had biases and got into a "power struggle" with a student, which created a large distraction for the rest of the class while she was teaching. She went on to describe how negative biases against students can impact success. She said, "if a student or a teacher already have like an image of how this year is going to go for this kid. It can be hard to have a successful year." She elaborated that these biases could be created from the school culture based on the labels of previous staff and misrepresentation of diagnostic.

Category 8. Challenges with Teachers in Multiple Roles

Twenty-five percent of the teachers discussed the challenges of having multiple roles or additional responsibilities on top of teaching their students. A total of seven critical incidents fell

under this category. The teachers talked about their role in providing similar services to specialists, such as nurses, social workers, music teachers, and physical education teachers. Similarly, P2 noted that due to shortages in specialized service staff such as OTs, SLPs, and psychologists, teachers are often taught how to intervene with students who are "weak but not weak enough" and do not qualify for services. P12 noted that she often has to be the teacher and the parent to her students. P3 also noted the additional work in filing and managing paperwork that is beyond what is typically expected of teachers, which takes away time from her teaching and supporting her students.

Category 9. Societal Pressures

Teachers discussed the challenges of societal pressure and unrealistic expectations from a society that is generally unaware of what happens in a classroom. They specifically mentioned the pressures from school boards and parents. Also, teachers discussed the culture of "normal" that is promoted by society and the challenges associated with insisting students should be normal. Seven critical incidents fell under this category from 33% of the interviews.

Two teachers described the challenges associated with feeling pressure from parents and the board. Specifically, P7 identified that there had been an increased pressure from parents to "accommodate for every need in the classroom." She has found that often when parents push for certain programming, they get it regardless of the appropriateness of that programming for their child. She noted:

> Parents feel more and more entitled every single year to march in and demand of the principal that their child is fully accommodated for in community school in full inclusion and we pay lip service to, we can't we never, you know we provide one-on-one but like I said, the bottom line is if they put on enough pressure, yes, we have to and they know it.

P7 described how parental pressures impacted inclusive education by creating a lack of support for other students in the classroom, which lead to frustration and fatigue in the staff. Similarly, P4 identified pressures from the school board were also challenging. She spoke of pressures to create unrealistic goals for students, which leads to unrealistic expectations for teachers.

P9 emphasized challenges with society in that they did not have a realistic sense of what happened in a classroom. She noted that society only hears "soundbites" to form opinions and often provide their opinions about education inappropriately. P9 described an analogy told to her by a professor, stating, "everybody thinks they can be a teacher because they went to school. But yet everybody doesn't think they can be a dentist because they've got [teeth]." She went on to say that education is often undervalued and viewed as an easy profession.

Category 10. Waiting and Patching for Services

Teachers discussed the challenges associated with waiting for their students to receive services due to lack of community resources, lack of clarity or obstacles to services, and parents' unwillingness to access services. While waiting for services, teachers indicated they still have to support the student by patching informal services. A total of eight critical incidents fell under this category based on interviews with two participants. P2 spoke about her concerns with requiring students to struggle significantly before providing services, which results in the patching together of services. She described her experiences related to lack of community services such as eye exams and the challenges with lack of clarity and the "loops and stuff to go through" that made it difficult for teachers, let alone parents, to access services. P13 also described challenges with parents who refuse additional support for their child, which delays appropriate interventions and requires teachers to do much more research than they would have to with professional staff support. P13 noted that this often leads to burnout in teachers. She described her own experience,

stating, "I'm trying to do what I can…but knowing I can only do so much for them."

Category 11. Challenges with Standardized Testing

P1 discussed the challenges of administering and using standardized tests, such as grade-level tests and benchmarks, in inclusive classrooms. Specifically, she mentioned the tests themselves do not provide a full picture of student learning. She noted, "I find [standardized tests] really hard, especially for the students that are more extreme in their needs, because the standardized test is the absolute opposite of inclusion." She went on to elaborate that "all of these strategies we're implementing in inclusive education to have inclusive classrooms are often not transferrable to these [standardized] tests."

Wish List Factors

Participants were asked to identify factors or aspects that they believe would help their implementation of inclusive education. Many teachers spoke of their "perfect world" perspective of what would help inclusive education. Eleven categories emerged from the data. Table 5 provides an overview of the categories, the rate at which participants endorsed the category, and the total number of critical incidents noted in each category.

Category 1. Changes to Personnel Support

Teachers discussed their desire to have more support from people, including specialists, EAs, and administrators, and changes to supports provided by these professionals, such as having EAs trained and valued monetarily and administrators being informed about inclusive education. A total of 35 critical incidents fell under this category from 75% of the participants.

Many teachers emphasized they wanted more personnel in general, without naming specific individuals. As P7 mentioned, "the more people you have, then the more that those people can assist in the child accessing programming." Further, P9 stated, "I know that teachers

Table 5

Wish List Factor Categories

Category	Number of Factors (n)	Participation Rate (%)
Category 1 - Changes to Personnel Support	35	75%
Category 2 - Changes to Classroom Composition	13	58%
Category 3 - Changes to and Maintenance of Teacher Education	14	42%
Category 4 - More Resources	12	42%
Category 5 - Improved Physical Classroom	11	33%
Category 6 - Time to Build and Improve Relationships	8	33%
Category 7 - Increased Focus on Personal Wellness	3	25%
Category 8 - Increased Support for Families	6	17%
Category 9 - Increased Societal Understanding of the Expectations of Teachers	2	17%
Category 10 - Less Paperwork	2	8%

are always asking for more money for our schools and stuff. And I think that's the reason. It's not necessarily more money for us. It's that we want more manpower." Teachers described the impact more people would have on inclusive education, explaining that it would support teachers to feel less overwhelmed, think about inclusive education differently, and overall support students to learn.

Over half of the participants identified they would like more support from EAs in terms of more EAs hired to create more time with EAs in the classroom. Many teachers spoke of the impact students having one-on-one EAs would have on their classrooms. Specifically, P3 noted

In a perfect world, what would make it better is to have, if you got a behaviour student with severe ODD [Oppositional Defiant Disorder], that student needs a one on one EA, absolutely. I can speak from my experiences having taught the same class in grade one to now, having the same student and no support in grade one, to now some support, it has made a big difference.

Other teachers noted having an EA designated for each classroom would be beneficial to them.

The teachers described the potential benefit of more EAs. P8 noted that more support from EAs would be beneficial, allowing all students in her classroom to get additional support, but students who had additional learning needs especially would benefit from this support. She further explained this support for students who struggled academically "would also have an impact on their ability to access the grade-level curriculum and to participate in grade-level activities which would have an impact not just on their education but on the class culture." Other teachers also emphasized that students would likely feel more emotionally supported with additional support from EAs. Overall, the teachers identified the benefits additional EA support would provide them and their students.

While teachers noted the benefits of having EAs, other teachers indicated the desire for some shifts to occur to the practices of EAs. For example, P4 mentioned that EAs should be properly trained to ensure they support students and allow students to work on their own. Further, P9 noted that EAs should be compensated for their education and training. As she mentioned:

> I think most of [the EAs] would take extra courses to bump up, but they're not paid accordingly. So would you like spend $500 and take a course when you're still going to get paid the same... it doesn't even get you further on their scale of if they get to keep their job next year.

She explained that often EAs are working one-on-one with students who have significant needs, but yet the system is not "fair to that support." With these changes in place, both teachers noted that this shift would be an investment in their students to ensure they have confidence and can graduate high school.

Teachers wanted more support from specialists, including school counsellors, learning

coaches, therapists, and those who provide "tier two and three" support (e.g., more intensive support for a smaller number of students). Notably, P9 mentioned the benefits of having specialists within her schools was more beneficial as they were more likely to understand the school culture and avoid making assumptions about how schools operate. Similarly, P7 specified that work with therapists needed to have more substance. She said,

> I would like to see an increase in therapists, but I think the work has to change. I wouldn't want just more of the same. I think it's become so watered down. I don't want more watered down. I want people who can actually do some of the direct service.

The emphasis was to have people who specialized in certain areas provide additional support to teachers to continue to learn and support students.

Two teachers discussed the impact of having colleagues with positive attitudes would have on inclusive education. A positive attitude referred to a teachers' demeanour and openness to try new ideas. Teachers mentioned more positive attitudes would create a sense of community among students and staff and an acceptance of differences. As P14 mentioned, "even if you're positive, there are going to be really, really hard days or hard situations with families. So, someone to kind of to support you during those hard days too."

Two teachers wished for informed administrators about inclusive education—specifically, principals who had the knowledge to provide advice and set standards for inclusion at their schools. P13 also noted wishing for principals that "pop in and check on how the kids are doing" to show that the students are loved and cared for and that the teacher is also supported.

Category 2. Changes to Classroom Composition

Teachers discussed their desire for considerations to be made to classroom composition, including smaller class sizes in general, consideration of students' class placement, and a

consideration of the class size and complexity of the class. Thirteen critical incidents fell under this category from 58% of participants. Although there were similarities to these three subcategories, there were also stark differences.

Half of the teachers wished for changes to the overall class size. Teachers wanted fewer students in their inclusive classrooms, noting that it would allow them more time to work with each student. P3 described her experiences working with class sizes ranging from 18 to 34 students, noting "it is not humanly possible" to work with each student. One teacher noted specifically that considerations about student placement would improve inclusive education. She mentioned that considerations surrounding personality, group dynamics, exhibiting behaviours, and emotional background should be considered when organizing student classes. Another teacher noted that it was not the size or complexity of the class that she wished to change, but rather she wishes to consider these factors together. As P13 stated,

> The class complexity and class size probably makes a difference…if I had a nice size class with an x amount of needs that I wouldn't feel so spread thin and I would have essentially the energy and the resources and all of that stuff to actually do the best for the kids.

Changes to class composition would provide teachers with more time to work with students one-on-one, their workload would be decreased, and it would foster a better work-life balance.

Category 3. Changes to and Maintenance of Teacher Education

Teachers discussed the impact improvements to their own education would have on inclusive education. A quarter of the teachers noted that they wanted time for in-service teacher mentoring or other collaborative time. Many of the teachers spoke about this type of format as a way to gain new perspectives. For example, P1 described her ideal situation for collaboration:

> I would say every couple months or even every month have been a round robin for a couple days in the school, so you can see other teachers in the same grade or other teachers in different classrooms or even other teachers in other schools. If it's still applicable to what you're doing and learning about, just to see the different things that are going on in inclusive education.

Some of the teachers identified that scheduling and practicalities of teaching made it challenging to arrange this type of mentoring or collaboration time, but that this type of time could help with their confidence in teaching inclusive classrooms and improve their skills.

A few teachers also noted wanting to make changes to their professional development opportunities. For example, P10 noted wanted pre-emptive PD for specific conditions that students in her class may have, such as Tourette Syndrome, instead of going to PD after the student has been enrolled in her classroom. On the other hand, P2 wanted professional development to be more ongoing and school-wide to ensure that the entire school received the same message and would be held accountable for it.

Two teachers also indicated wanting to make changes to pre-service teacher education programs. Both teachers discussed their desire to have all new teachers graduate from their teacher education programs with practical time and coursework in inclusive classrooms. As P7 mentioned, when new teachers do not have these experiences, "we spend a huge amount of time and money reacting" to teachers being overwhelmed in needing to plan for a diverse group of students. Both of the teachers identified that this exposure would allow teachers to enter the classroom more positively and with tools that will support them.

Category 4. More Resources

Nearly half of the teachers noted more resources as a wish list factor, including having

more access to physical resources and more knowledge about resources. As P3 mentioned, more resources would allow teachers to not "beg, borrow and short of stealing a sensory item or chewies" to provide these types of supports to their students. P8 mentioned in her interview that she wanted more knowledge about resources available to her. Specifically, she described an experience of being unaware of a literacy and numeracy program for students, which "made [her] wonder, what other resources are out there that I don't even know about," especially for students who had severe needs.

Category 5. Improve Physical Classroom

Teachers discussed their wishes for improvements to the physical classroom and the impact they would have on inclusive education. Eleven critical incidents fell under this category from 33% of participants. Specifically, the teachers mentioned improvements to the classroom's physical space and features (e.g., air conditioning and sinks). The teachers described their wishes for larger classrooms, breakout spaces, additional furniture for flexible seating, and classrooms with windows were just some of the features mentioned. Many teachers noted that the classroom size itself was often a cause of contention in their classrooms as students did not have enough room to spread out, let alone work at a separate table for additional support.

Category 6. Time to Build and Improve Relationships

A third of teachers wished for improved relationships between stakeholders (e.g., administrators, community supports, etc.), students, and parents. Eight critical incidents fell under this category. Teachers mentioned the importance of relationships and wished they could take the time to build relationships. P9 mentioned wishing for time to sit down and interview her students' parents better to understand the student and the parents' goals. As she mentioned, "I can't have those kinds of meetings with parents all the time, but I think that's getting to know the

families and having that information is probably most bang for your buck really."

Category 7. Increased Focus on Personal Wellness

Teachers wished for more support for their personal wellbeing, including a focus on life-work balance and more accessible health policies. Three critical incidents fell under this category from 25% of participants. In her interview, P5 explained that "life-work balance [was not] really a thing" due to the multiple demands placed on her as a teacher. In her interview, P12 noted that she wished for health policies to be more flexible in the services offered so that she could access wellness activities such as yoga.

Category 8. Increased Support for Families

Teachers wished for more support for families, such as wraparound care and family programs. Six critical incidents fell under this category from 17% of participants. P5 explained the importance of "understanding that when we're dealing with special needs, we have apples injuries. And what I mean is the apple is the student who does not fall far from the tree." She went on to explain that often the parents of students have challenges that need to be supported, and, therefore, it is beneficial "to have the resources to help the parents that have apples." P5 viewed these types of services as beneficial within and beyond inclusive education, stating:

> It would impact the entire economy. We would actually have a world-class education system if that were the case because we would not be causing trauma. School refusal would likely drop or look different. Parents' combativeness with teachers and leadership would totally be different because they're not on advocating burnout. Plus, we're supporting them any way we can. I think it would be more efficient within the school, and within the community, because we're all talking to each other.

P9 had similar thoughts, stating that the school was a great place to host evening family

programs as it was a "low-risk environment" for parents, stating, "schools are the way to reach people because where do your kids go all the time? They go to school." As she mentioned,

> I really feel like if we were able to make that difference in these younger grades and set whole families up for success, I think it would be better for just our social systems in general. We probably wouldn't have to be helping families so much.

Like P5, P9 also noted that investment in support for families at the school level would create change within and beyond inclusive education, such as improvement to the judicial system and improving future generations of parents and citizens.

Category 9. Increased Societal Understanding of the Expectations of Teachers

Two teachers wished for society to have a greater understanding of the expectations that are put on teachers, and a total of two critical incidents fell under this category. P3 noted,

> We do wear many hats. It might be nurse, it might be counsellor, it might be teacher, it might be mom, it might take the place of dad. You might be their only person that talks to them all day. There are a lot of factors.

The two teachers noted that an increased societal understanding about teachers' expectations would help them feel more supported and less stressed.

Category 10. Less Paperwork

One teacher wished for less paperwork in terms of filling out forms and paperwork. Two critical incidents fell under this category. She noted that fewer paperwork duties would create opportunities to shift the time spent on paperwork to other activities like self-care.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the demographic information of the twelve participants and the results of the analysis of the three contextual questions were reviewed. Six themes were

identified for what inclusive education meant to participants: (1) all children in one classroom regardless of needs and abilities, (2) meeting student needs, (3) community and belonging, (4) accepted or normal, (5) learning and a quality education, and (6) perspective-based. Seven themes were identified for what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like: (1) features of the classroom as a community, (2) features of the classroom space, (3) everyone participating, (4) student needs are met, (5) personnel support, (6) teacher factors, and (7) variation in what it looks like. Teachers rated their overall confidence as an average of 7, with a range of 1-10. Seven themes were identified in terms of how the participant's confidence in inclusive education has changed: (1) increased from ongoing learning, (2) influence of teaching experience, (3) personal factors, (4) classroom composition of needs, (5) changes in expectations for teachers, (6) starting brand new, and (7) community of teachers.

Two hundred twenty-five critical incidents were identified as helping inclusive education, which were grouped into ten categories: (1) support from people, (2) teacher knowledge/ education, (3) open communication, (4) teachers' experience, (5) strategies/ teaching practices, (6) relationships with students, (7) teacher mindset, (8) managing stress, (9) materials, and (10) predictable and ethical use of the budget. One hundred thirty critical incidents were identified as hindering inclusive education, which were grouped into 11 categories: (1) lack of resources, (2) challenges with class composition, (3) challenges with EA support, (4) lack of time, (5) challenges with therapy teams, (6) challenges with principal involvement, (7) challenges with staff group, (8) challenges with teachers in multiple roles, (9) challenges with societal pressures, (10) waiting and patching for services, and (11) challenges with standardized testing. One hundred six critical incidents were identified for factors participants wished for in inclusive education, which grouped into 11 categories: (1) changes to personnel support, (2) changes to

classroom composition, (3) changes to and maintenance of teacher education, (4) changes to money and resources, (5) improved physical classroom, (6) improved relationships, (7) increased focus on personal wellness, (8) increased support for families, (9) increased societal understanding of the expectations of teachers, and (10) less paperwork.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In Alberta, limited information is known about how teachers implement inclusive education. The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' perceptions of factors that support and hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Alberta's elementary school, as well as the factors they wish they had. Twelve teachers in Alberta participated in semi-structured interviews that followed the methodology of ECIT to understand contextual information about the implementation of inclusive education, critical incidents regarding what helped and hindered the implementation, and what factors teachers wished for to better support inclusive education practice. Data for the contextual information was analyzed using thematic analysis, while the critical incidents (helping and hindering) and wish list factors were analyzed using ECIT.

In the previous chapter, I described the results from the current study, including the contextual information, critical incidents (helping and hindering), and wish list factors. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: to act as the ninth and final step of ECIT by examining the results in light of other literature to foster theoretical validity and interpret the findings, and to discuss the study's significance. Specifically, this chapter will explore the theoretical agreement of the current study's underlying assumptions and the theoretical agreement of the categories identified in the study based on the research questions. Next, this chapter will discuss the implications of teachers, psychologists, teacher training programs, and policymakers. I conclude the chapter with the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Theoretical Agreement

As part of ECIT, Butterfield and colleagues (2005) identify a ninth and final credibility check to check for the theoretical agreement between the current study and the literature. This process involves two parts: (1) articulating and reporting the underlying assumptions of the study

and comparing these with research and (2) comparing the categories with the literature.

Underlying Assumptions of the Study

As indicated in Butterfield and colleagues (2005), the ninth credibility check involves comparing the current study results with other research. The authors outline that this should be done by first reporting the underlying assumptions made from the study. An underlying assumption is an explicit statement of the assumptions or findings found in the current research. There were several underlying assumptions based on the information collected in this study. The major assumptions included: (1) the nuances of inclusive education are not universally agreed upon among teachers, (2) parental involvement is viewed as transactional, (3) teacher training programs are not sufficient or consistent sources of information on inclusive education, so teachers seek out other sources, and (4) without additional support, teachers fear inclusive education may not support students. This section will review each of these underlying assumptions and discuss them in the context of previously conducted research.

Assumption 1: The Nuances of Inclusive Education are not Universally Agreed Upon Among Teachers. As Göransson and Nilholm (2014) mentioned, there are several definitions of inclusive education. These include definitions based on the placement of students with exceptionalities into regular education classrooms, definitions based on a specified individualized perspective that focuses on the needs of students with exceptionalities, definitions based on a general individualized perspective that focuses on all students needs (with and without exceptionalities), and definitions that focus on the concept of community. The lack of agreement on inclusive education in the literature creates challenges in providing a clear and succinct definition; however, most researchers agree inclusive education, minimally, refers to students with varying abilities being educated in the same classroom as their same-age peers,

which is consistent with a placement definition (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). There are many challenges with this definition as it assumes only physical placement instead of meaningful involvement (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). All teachers in the current study described inclusion using this broad definition; however, eight of the twelve participants elaborated on their definition.

Among the eight participants who elaborated on their definitions, disparities continued to be apparent. The descriptors provided by teachers in this study fit within the definitions described by Göransson and Nilholm (2014). Nearly half of the teachers in the current study mentioned that inclusive education should ensure students feel accepted or considered normal. This type of description is similar to both the community definition and the general individualized definition. These teachers emphasized a sense of belonging and community by accepting students for whom they were and minimizing differences, and/or considering these differences to be normal. Although teachers often mentioned these two concepts together, this combination could be problematic as it suggests that teachers use typically developing peers to create the standard to which students with exceptionalities should uphold. There is a general contrast to being accepted and feeling normal, in that being accepted insinuates a valuing of diversity, while feeling normal suggests that students with exceptionalities are abnormal. Similarly, this implies that the teachers may minimize these students' needs to consider them normal or not meet their needs entirely.

The concept of emphasizing belonging when defining inclusive education was also mentioned by Lyons and colleagues (2016). In their study, teachers discussed student friendships and belonging as an important value of inclusive education. Specifically, the study's teachers mentioned "concerted efforts to facilitate interaction in relationships among students" (p. 896).

Although a few teachers in the current study mentioned the concept of belonging with peers when teachers described what inclusive education meant to them, this sentiment was not mentioned as an area that helped implement inclusive education. Peer relationships were not mentioned in any of the helping, hindering, or wish list categories. In the current study, teachers mentioned taking time to build relationships with students, including the importance of building and maintaining relationships with all students and using this relationship to help foster resiliency and confidence in their students. This omission is concerning as most of the rhetoric from teachers about inclusive education is on student belonging, yet none of the teachers mentioned peer relationships in this study. This difference may be because teachers were explicitly asked what helped them implement inclusive education, rather than what helped the overall implementation of inclusive education. Nonetheless, while peer belonging is common rhetoric in the inclusive movement, it did not appear to be a focal point for teachers' implementation in the current study.

Overall, the current study results corroborate previous literature that has suggested inclusive education as a concept holds multiple meanings and is not consistently described by teachers. Notably, it will be important for future research to explore further how teachers define inclusive education and how they describe the successful implementation better to understand the similarities and differences between these conceptualizations.

Assumption 2: Parental Involvement is Viewed as Transactional. Both the current and previous studies have identified parental involvement and communication in inclusive education as instrumental to its success (Lyons et al., 2016). In the study by Lyons and colleagues (2016), teachers spoke of parental involvement as an ongoing, collaborative process in which both the teachers and the parents trust each other, share their perspectives openly, and

compromise when needed. The general focus of conversations about parents in the current study

centred on parents supporting teachers in working with students. Teachers also focused on the

importance of parents' willingness to share sensitive information about their child so that

teachers could support students. Further, teachers discussed with parents what their expectations

of their child were and determined whether these expectations were realistic. In fact, one

participant mentioned that in teaching, she has many roles, one of which she feels as though is

taking the role of the parent. Much of what was described in terms of parental involvement was

surrounding parental acceptance of teacher support and teachers emphasizing the need for

parents to have realistic expectations. In many ways, parents were described as primarily a

resource to support teacher goals instead of an integral piece of inclusive education.

This rhetoric around parental involvement was not found in other studies. This may be

due, in part, to the selection of the participants. As previously mentioned, many studies in

inclusive education, such as the study by Lyons and colleagues (2016), participants were selected

based on schools that were identified as successful in implementing inclusive education, whereas

this study only required that teachers identify as having taught an inclusive classroom. The

demographic makeup of the families between the studies could also be different. Nonetheless,

the current study results suggest that teachers see the relationship between parents and teachers

regarding inclusive education environments to be more transactional than collaborative.

Assumption 3: Teacher Training Programs Are Not Sufficient or Consistent Sources
of Information on Inclusive Education, So Teachers Seek out Other Sources. Within the

study, teachers identified that their confidence in implementing inclusive education increased

from learning more about inclusive education or special education. It is important to distinguish

that the participants viewed special education and inclusive education interchangeably in many

ways. This has implications as different considerations should be made in both systems. Like the literature, teachers in the present study discussed training as something that supported inclusive education practice (Smith & Smith, 2000). A few teachers noted that their pre-service education programs provided them with basic information about implementing inclusive education. These participants reported attending programs that emphasized or at least included options to learn about inclusive or special education, which they noted as different from many of their colleagues' training experiences. Although their teacher training programs did not provide them with everything they needed, these participants described their training programs as providing foundational knowledge.

Notably, only three of the twelve teachers felt their pre-service training program provided them with an understanding of inclusive education or special education. This is consistent with Forlin's (2001) study, which found that over two-thirds of teachers' training programs did not provide education on teaching students with exceptionalities and McCrimmon's (2015) study which found few Canadian universities included coursework on inclusive education for pre-service teachers. However, the current study also found that teachers do not view their education as comprehensive when teachers do receive specific training in inclusive or special education. Rather, the teachers view this training as a base and continue seeking additional information and in-service training. These results are promising, given the results of Forlin's and Chambers' (2011) study. In their study, the authors found that including one course on inclusive education significantly improved pre-service teachers' knowledge and confidence in implementing inclusive education; however, the authors also found that this type increased the pre-service teachers' stress and their overall concerns about teaching in inclusive classrooms. Based on the current study results, teachers who received this type of training found it beneficial to create their

base knowledge but found their continued education helped them learn to further their understanding of supporting students in inclusive education.

While some teachers in the current study mentioned post-graduate university programs to gain this information, professional development opportunities were the most common training teachers mentioned in their interviews. Teachers identified that attending conferences and sessions offered by personnel within their district and participating in professional learning communities increased their understanding and improved their practice of supporting students in their inclusive classrooms. This was consistent with McLeskey's and colleagues' (2014) and Smith's and Smith's (2000) studies that found that professional development helped teachers answer questions they had to support students in their classrooms. However, it is important to mention that teachers in the current study deemed professional development and additional learning opportunities as helpful without providing specific information about how it helped. Therefore, it is unclear from the current study whether professional development shows a measurable difference in teachers' understanding.

In addition to further education through professional development opportunities, collaboration, and mentoring from others were also mentioned as areas that supported teachers' knowledge and skill in inclusive education. This is consistent with the literature which described the collaborative role of support staff, administrators, teachers, families, communities, and other professionals were mentioned in the literature as instrumental in supporting teachers in inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Smith & Smith, 2000). The challenge with teachers learning from one another is that it is unclear the quality of information being shared or whether the information is based on evidence-based practices, which in turn can foster and perpetuate poor pedagogy.

Teachers also discussed the training they received through experiences outside of formal education experiences, which is not mentioned in the current literature on implementing inclusive education. A third of teachers discussed the knowledge they gained through their teaching experience. The teachers emphasized they learned based on varied experiences in different schools, grades, and with different students each year and in different education roles. Similarly, teachers described the impact experiences outside of education, such as being a parent or working in another field, which helped them implement inclusive education.

Within this study, teachers identified that they would like to see improvements to the education they receive. Although two teachers discussed wanting changes to be made to teacher education programs, more frequently, teachers discussed the role of mentoring, collaboration, and professional development in more detail. Teachers described the positive impact having the opportunity to engage in mentorship or collaboration opportunities with other staff would have on their confidence in inclusive education. Similarly, professional development opportunities would provide specific information about conditions students have been diagnosed with. Together, this information suggests that, although teachers value training from the education programs, experiences gained post-training are just as important. Although these opportunities may improve teachers' confidence, it is also important to consider how it improves teachers' skills and student learning. Therefore, ongoing individual and whole-school professional development may be important in ensuring teachers understand how to support inclusive classrooms, but it is important to determine the effectiveness of these opportunities.

Assumption 4: Without Additional Support, Teachers Fear Inclusive Education may not Support Students. Teachers emphasized that the increasing class sizes paired with the increasing complexity of student needs in the classroom made it challenging for them to ensure

all of their students were being supported. This was identified as a hindering factor by two-thirds of the participants. Specifically, teachers mentioned the challenges in teaching students whose functioning spanned over multiple grade levels. Teachers frequently mentioned needing to triage student needs as there was not enough time to meet all of the needs in the classroom, which subsequently impacted their confidence in teaching abilities. As a result, teachers emphasized the need for support from people to ensure students were being supported in the classroom.

Teachers mentioned that support from EAs creates additional opportunities to meet student needs and ensures all students have connections with adults in the classroom. With EA support, teachers feel less instructional time is lost and feel more effective in meeting student needs. More support from EAs would benefit all students in the classroom as there would be more adults available to support students both academically and emotionally. While the role of EAs was not commented on as frequently in the literature, other researchers found that both general support from personnel, support through collaboration, and personal support was helpful in inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; Ely, 2013; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; McLeskey et al., 2014).

Apart from supporting the day-to-day logistics of implementing inclusive education, teachers identified that colleagues, including EAs, also supported them through collaboration. Teachers noted that they often learned from their colleagues both practical strategies and different perspectives. Colleague support was the most commonly mentioned factor that helped in the implementation of inclusive education (92% mentioned). Teachers mentioned collaboration helped them learn and brainstorm new strategies to support students in their classroom. This is consistent with the literature, which also found collaboration to be a vital support in inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013).

Teachers also mentioned the support from specialists as a factor sought out. Teachers noted specialists provided valuable information for supporting students in their classrooms. Teachers identified that the number of specialists has decreased over the years, leaving teachers to fill in the gaps and play a specialist's role. This has implications for student success as teachers are not trained to provide specialized services. In general, teachers wanted more support from specialists to provide services to students who required more intensive support. In fact, teachers were looking for more direct support from specialists and recommendations on supporting students in the classroom. Several organizations have been advocating for a more diverse role of specialists, including the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2020). Specifically, NASP encourages school psychologists to engage in a wide variety of practices that support the needs of teachers, students, families, and the wider school community. They outlined ten practice model domains to encourage service delivery diversity, ranging from school psychologists being involved in data-based decision making, consultation, interventions for academic, mental health, behavioural health, and school-wide practices. This may be related to funding and educational policy. For example, NASP recommends a ratio of one school psychologist per 500-700 students; however, many school psychologists in Alberta work with much higher ratios (NASP, 2020). Recent cuts to education have resulted in layoffs to psychology positions in a large urban school board in Alberta. In a news article about the layoffs, a school board official stated that jobs would be prioritized for roles that directly impact student learning (Smith, 2020). This oversight of specialists, such as school psychologists, diverse roles suggests these roles are not valued, despite teachers' concerns.

Examining the Research Questions

The second aspect of the theoretical agreement of the ninth credibility check in ECIT is

to compare the categories themselves with the literature. This section will be contextualized within the context of the four research questions of the study: (1) How do teachers define and describe inclusive education? (2) What factors support teachers in implementing inclusive education? (3) What factors detract from teachers implementing inclusive education? and (4) What, if any, factors warrant further investigation in supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education? Notably, the first research question refers to the information collected as part of the contextualized information in ECIT but will be described similarly to the categories collected in the helping and hindering critical incidents and wish list factors.

      1. Defining and Describing Inclusive Education. The first research question sought to identify how teachers defined and described inclusive education. In the present study, this was identified through the contextual questions posed at the beginning of interview one. Overall, there were differences in how participants described what inclusive education meant and what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like. Holistically, the information collected from participants provided vague ideals as opposed to concrete and measurable descriptions. While this research's scope did not lend itself to more in-depth exploration and follow-up questions, these descriptions are consistent with the literature in that few definitions have measurable components (Limbach-Reich, 2015; Lindsay, 2003; 2007).

      Consistent with the literature, all participants described inclusive education in terms of all students being in one classroom regardless of their needs and abilities (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). As described in Assumption One, there was little agreement on what inclusive education meant among participants beyond this one aspect. Only four referred to learning or education when describing inclusive education, and none referred explicitly to education or learning when asked to describe what a successful inclusive education classroom

looked like. Rather, teachers spoke about participation as opposed to learning. In this way, teachers appeared to conflate notions of place rather than forms of learning (or pedagogy). Similarly, only four participants discussed inclusive education as meeting students' needs, but this reduced to only two participants when asked what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like. This information suggests that teachers generally view inclusive education as a place, using the placement definition of inclusive education (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). While not popularly used in defining inclusive education, it is the most common form of measuring inclusion in research (Idol, 2006; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009).

The concept of community and belonging is a common sentiment in inclusive education definitions (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013; Hornby, 2015; Robo, 2011). In the current study, only three teachers mentioned the concept of community and belonging when asked what inclusive education meant; however, two-thirds of the participants commented on aspects related to the classroom as a community when asked what successful inclusive education looked like. The contrast between how teachers define versus describe successful inclusion is concerning. It suggests that teachers may emphasize belonging over meeting students' diverse educational needs. In fact, while two-thirds of teachers mentioned community and belonging in describing a successful inclusive education classroom, only two teachers mentioned that this type of classroom would meet student needs but did not elaborate on what type of needs (e.g., academic, social, adaptive skills). This is a common concern among researchers in inclusive education as students' belonging is necessary but not sufficient for inclusion to effectively teach students with exceptionalities (Hornby, 2015; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989).

2. Factors That Support the Implementation of Inclusive Education. The second research question sought to identify which factors teachers attributed to supporting them in

implementing inclusive education. Within the current study, teachers discussed ten categories that supported them, including (1) support from people, (2) teacher knowledge/education, (3) open communication, (4) teachers' experience, (5) strategies/ teaching practice, (6) relationships with students, (7) teacher mindset, (8) managing stress, (9) materials, and (10) predictable and ethical use of the budget. In this section, I will review each category as a whole with the literature, examining key similarities and differences.

The most common helping factor was support from people. Teachers described specific people and how their support impacted them in inclusive education. For example, teachers described the multifaceted ways their colleagues supported them through collaboration and instructional support and supported them emotionally and personally. Similarly, teachers described the role of EAs in providing individualized support to students and limiting the loss of instructional time and supporting the teachers in feeling effective in an inclusive education classroom. The literature referenced principals as instrumental in fostering and demonstrating a commitment to inclusion (Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014; Wlodarczyk et al., 2015), which teachers in the current study echoed. It was important that principals were committed to inclusive education, understood the realities of inclusive classrooms, and were willing and able to support teachers to be more effective in their classrooms. In Lyons' and colleagues' (2016) study of successful inclusive schools, they noted principals had an unrelenting commitment to inclusion paired with respect, support, and appreciation for teachers.

The second most commonly referred to factor that supported inclusive education was the importance of teacher's knowledge and education. Teachers described many aspects that supported their knowledge and education, including professional development opportunities and university education. Consistent with the literature, many teachers relied on professional

development opportunities to learn more about supporting students in an inclusive classroom (McLeskey et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2000). One-third of the current study participants had explicitly identified the training they received in their teacher-training programs as supporting them in implementing inclusive education. This rate is consistent with the literature, which found that two-thirds of teachers received no training to support students with exceptionalities (Forlin, 2001). It is important to note that while teachers mentioned reviewing research, it is unclear what sources they accessed in their research.

The third most commonly referred to factor was the importance of open communication with parents, school staff, and community supports. This factor was similar to the concept of collaboration referred to in the literature (Lyons et al., 2016). Both the current study and the literature emphasized the importance of members' active involvement within and beyond the school to support students in inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013; Smith & Smith, 2000).

The fourth most common factor was the role of a teacher's experience. Forlin (2001) found a negative association between the number of years involved in inclusion and stress in inclusion. Specifically, the results suggested the more involvement a teacher has in inclusion, the less stress they report from inclusion. It is important to note that this finding was also linked to formal training in inclusion, which notably few teachers in this study had obtained. Although the literature does not mention experiences outside of the classroom, the experiences teachers in the current study described likely involve specific training in working with students with exceptionalities, which, as Forlin found, reduces stress levels of teachers in inclusion.

The teachers identified many strategies and teaching practices that they feel help them implement inclusive education, but many of these strategies and practices did not go beyond

general good teaching practices. For example, teachers describe using manipulatives and time for students to think as strategies that support students in inclusive education. Although this study did not ask teachers explicitly what strategies they used in inclusive education, nearly half of the teachers offered these strategies in response to their broader understanding of inclusive education. This is concerning because if teachers feel these are the most important strategies that help them to deliver inclusive education effectively, they may not have a robust understanding of how to support students with exceptionalities who need specific targeted supports that are not typical in general education classes; especially given the limited reference to progress monitoring. While the literature did not describe specific teaching strategies, it did describe the teaching practice of using progress monitoring data to support students (McLeskley et al., 2013).

The sixth most commonly referred to factor was the importance of relationships with students in inclusive education. This factor was specifically related to teacher's relationships with students, which was not a focus in the literature on implementing inclusive education. Rather, the literature in this area emphasized the importance of peer relationships and the role teachers play in fostering environments that support these relationships (Lyons et al., 2016). While no other research has found teacher-student relationships as a factor that supports the implementation of inclusive education, there is research on the importance of positive student-teacher relationships in inclusive education (e.g., Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). It is also important to note that fostering positive student-teacher relationships encompass good general teaching and has been associated with positive educational outcomes (Davis, 2003).

Teachers mentioned the importance of their own mindset in inclusive education. The emphasis in this factor was for teachers to be open-minded, accept feedback, and understand that they might not reach every student. This differed from the literature, which focused on teachers'

attitudes and commitment to inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). Specifically, the literature identified that all staff needed to be passionate about inclusion, while the current study did not have the same emphasis (Lyons et al., 2016).

The eighth category discussed the importance of teachers managing their stress. Teachers discussed strategies they employ to manage stress and school-level practices that reduce stress. In the literature, teachers mentioned the importance of teacher support systems (Ely, 2013). While the current study's teachers commented on the importance of other teachers for emotional or personal support, they did not mention other teachers specifically to manage their stress.

In the ninth factor, teachers discussed the importance of physical materials in inclusive education. Similar findings were also found in the literature, which commented on the need for adequate physical resources and technology (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). The final category discussed the need for predictable and ethical use of budgets in inclusive education. In this category, P5 described the importance of funds being used for their intended purpose and increased accountability level. Alberta Education recently changed its funding structure, which intended to provide schools with more flexibility in providing student supports (Alberta Education, 2020b). Although there is no current research to substantiate this claim, Williamson and Gilham (2017) have theorized that the greater flexibility in funding theoretically could result in funds not being used for their intended purpose, similar to P5's concerns.

Holistically, it is also important to consider the similarities and differences between this study's findings to the ATA's (2014) Blue Ribbon Panel's findings of inclusive education. The panel found seven elements that supported the implementation of inclusive education. Many of these, including the role of leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement, were similar to the results found in the current study.

A notable difference, however, included the provision of a shared vision. The current study also had findings that were not consistent with the ATA (2014), including specified teaching strategies and practices, teachers' mindsets and stress management, and the role of predictable and ethical budget use. These differences may be due to the sample selection, as the current study examined only teachers, whereas the ATA (2014) collected information from teachers and administrators, as well as the phrasing and collection of information.

      3. Factors That Detract from the Implementation of Inclusive Education. The third research question sought to examine which factors detracted from teachers' implementation of inclusive education. Eleven categories were identified from the participants, which included (1) lack of money and resources, (2) challenges with class composition, (3) challenges with EA support, (4) lack of time, (5) challenges with therapy teams, (6) challenges with principal involvement, (7) challenges with staff group, (8) challenges with teachers in multiple roles, (9) challenges with societal pressures, (10) waiting and patching for services, and (11) challenges with standardized testing. Currently, no identified studies have explicitly examined factors that teachers identified as hindering their implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, much of the information presented here has not been examined by the literature. This section will discuss new concepts that have not been examined by the literature and similarities and differences of these categories among the literature.

      Teachers identified a lack of resources as a hindrance to inclusive education. Specifically, limited funds impacted the availability of specialized staff, which created challenges in managing all classroom needs. This resulted in the triaging of student needs, which left many students who only mildly struggled with less priority. While the teachers in the current study discussed the challenges in having too few specialized staff members (e.g., OT, SLP, social

workers, mental health therapists, psychologists, and academic area specialists), the research referred to general personnel support, such as special education educators (Bešić et al., 2016; Carrington et al., 2016). Further, the research identified that lack of these services led teachers to feel isolated and have negative experiences in inclusive education (Ely, 2013). In the current study, teachers identified that not having specialized staff members was detrimental to students. Similarly, current literature also identified lack of adequate training as contributing to negative attitudes and experiences for teachers in inclusive education (Ely, 2013), while the teachers in the current study identified that lack of access to funds for training purposes impacts their abilities to learn more about specific conditions to support them in the classroom.

Teachers also mentioned lack of access to other resources such as physical materials and technology as hindering inclusive education. While some tools, such as pencil grips, are beneficial for students, it is important to note that other tools mentioned, such as coloured transparencies, are ineffective in supporting students with exceptionalities (Saint-John & White, 1988). This is an important distinction as teachers mentioned the lack of these tools hinder their implementation of inclusive education, even though these tools would not be effective even if they had access. Although this study included limited examples of these practices, the inclusion of these debunked practices suggests a lack of knowledge of evidence-based supports for students. Similarly, considering the nature of the mentioned tools, it may be the case that teachers are interested in only quick fixes to student concerns. Further, teachers did not mention intervention services as something that they would wish for in inclusive education.

The second most common category in the current study is classroom composition challenges. The teachers discussed challenges with their class size and student diversity, which led them to some teachers questioning whether the inclusive classroom was the best possible

setting for students with significant needs. In the literature, teachers have expressed concerns with students with internalizing mental health and externalizing disruptive behaviour in their classrooms (Carrington et al., 2016; Smith & Smith, 2000; Sokal & Katz, 2015), whereas, in the current study, teachers' concerns were more aligned with challenges managing significant ranges of grade-level abilities and feeling unable to provide students with what they needed. This finding was significant given that all teachers mentioned that inclusive education involved all students regardless of their needs and abilities. Together this information suggests that teachers' explicit definitions and actual practices may differ.

Consistent with the literature, this study also found that teaching in an inclusive classroom increases teachers' responsibilities (Carrington et al., 2016; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005). This was mentioned regarding challenges with more responsibilities being added to teachers that impact their class composition. One participant identified that because she had more training in specific areas, she was often given more responsibilities than her colleagues, specifically in having a greater diversity of students in her classroom. Notably, the literature identified additional responsibilities in inclusive education from meetings, paperwork, program development, and supervision of students (Carrington et al., 2016).

The third most common category related specifically to challenges teachers had with EAs. Consistent with the literature, teachers identified challenges with decreased EA support (Bešić et al., 2016; Carrington et al., 2016). In the current study, teachers also identified challenges with EAs not having limited competence or training to support students in inclusive education. Despite teachers' concerns surrounding the limited training of EAs, EAs were among the most commonly referred to supports in inclusive education, with most teachers requesting more support from EAs.

Teachers also discussed the detrimental impact that lack of time had on implementing inclusive education. This was consistent with Bešić's and colleagues' (2016) findings that teachers in inclusive education found it challenging to find the time to plan for their classrooms. Teachers in the current study described their challenges with completing tasks in the classroom, many of which they completed on their own time, and challenges having the time to check in with and support all students, especially those who have mild educational concerns.

In the current study, teachers identified they have challenges accessing therapy teams and have concerns with the recommendations made by services when available. In the literature, researchers have found that teachers prefer specific and individualized recommendations to support education planning (Umaña et al., 2020). Although there is research on the utility of therapy teams and specialists, the literature on the implementation of inclusive education has not identified challenges with therapy teams in inclusive education. This may be due to the lack of research available on factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education.

Principals are another factor that supported the implementation of inclusive education (Idol, 2006; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014; Wlodarczyk et al., 2015), which was consistent with the current study; however, principals could also be a hindrance to inclusive education. Teachers in the current study described challenges when principals were inappropriately or inadequately involved in inclusive education, not emotionally supportive, or had limited knowledge about inclusive education.

Teachers discussed challenges with their school staff group, including negative attitudes or biases towards students. While not mentioned directly in the literature on factors that hinder teachers' implementation of inclusive education, the literature emphasizes the impact of staff commitment to inclusion in its implementation (Lyons et al., 2016, p. 897; McLeskey et al.,

2014). Considering the research available on fostering positive attitudes among teachers in inclusive education (e.g., Lautenbach et al., 2020), it is likely that this has not come up in the implementation literature due to the lack of research specifically examining hindering factors.

Teachers found their roles in inclusive education classrooms to be multifaceted and felt the multiple roles they took on to implement inclusive education was detrimental. Specifically, teachers mentioned they often have to provide similar services to professional services (e.g., OT, SLP), which is beyond the scope of their competence. Although unclear from the current study, it may be that these services are beyond teacher's scopes of practice; however, it may also be that teachers are being expected to work with students who have conditions that they are not familiar with. An expectation of teachers is to teach students, not teach content; therefore, there is the expectation of teachers to learn how to provide services for students who may also receive speech, psychological, or OT services and be aware of how to use the information from these professionals to teach their students. In fact, Sadler (2005) found that teachers had low confidence in teaching students with speech and language challenges. Although the focus is more consistent with additional program development roles, this relates to findings in the literature related to the additional responsibilities added to teachers in inclusive education (Carrington et al., 2016; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005). Together this information reinforces that inclusive education adds additional demands on teachers but also highlights the need for teachers to advocate when educational expectations are beyond their scope of practice.

Teachers in the current study mentioned the pressure they felt from society. Teachers identified pressures they received from parents and school boards to provide an educational experience that may have been unrealistic for students in an inclusive setting, which they identified as detrimental to inclusive education. Many researchers have described their concerns

with implementing inclusive education, noting discrepancies between rhetoric ideals and classroom realities (Haug, 2017; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020; Kavale & Forness, 2000). Teachers feel this pressure, as they are expected to provide an educational experience based on ideals rather than the realities of the resources provided.

Similarly, teachers mentioned the impact of waiting for services, which leads them to patch together services to support students. This led to many teachers feeling ineffective in their roles. While the impact of lack of services has not been addressed in the literature from the perspective of teachers, research has examined how low personal accomplishment has influenced teacher burnout rates (Shackleton et al., 2019).

Finally, teachers mentioned concerns about standardized testing, in that in inclusive education, many of the standardized tests do not allow the strategies being implemented in inclusive classrooms. Research on standardized testing has made similar claims, noting that teachers often feel as though they have to prepare students for the test instead of educating students about concepts (Mayes & Howell, 2018).

4. Factors Teachers Wish for in Implementing Inclusive Education. The final research question examined what factors warranted further investigation supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education. Participants identified ten categories as factors they wish they had in inclusive education. These include (1) changes to personnel support, (2) changes to classroom composition, (3) changes to and maintenance of teacher education, (4) more resources, (5) improved physical classroom, (6) time to build and improve relationships, (7) increased focus on personal wellness, (8) increased support for families, (9) increased societal understanding of the expectations of teachers, and (10) less paperwork. Similar to the section on hindering factors, no study to date has explicitly examined factors teachers have wished for in

implementing inclusive education. Therefore, this section will tie in relevant literature where possible and highlight information that has not been explored in the literature.

The most commonly referred to factor that teachers wished for in inclusive education was with making changes to the support they receive from personnel. In general, teachers most frequently mentioned having more support from EAs and specialists specifically and overall support from more personnel. This information was consistent across all areas of the study and is consistent with the literature (Bešić et al., 2016; Carrington et al., 2016). In the current study, teachers also discussed changes to personnel support regarding more positive attitudes among their colleagues. While the research has not identified this area as something that teachers have wished for in the past, it fits with the literature that has identified teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion as helping the implementation of inclusive education (Forlin et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2009; Male, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014; Vaz et al., 2015). Unlike the literature, the teachers in the current study focused on teachers' positive attitudes in general, as opposed to the research, which focused on teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusive education (Forlin et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2009).

The second most common category was wishing for changes to their classroom composition. Teachers want considerations to be made towards the number of students in their classes, the complexity of student needs, and these two factors together. This was consistent with what teachers identified as a hindering factor. Unlike the literature, the teachers did not report concerns about internalizing and externalizing behaviours impacting the implementation of inclusive education (Carrington et al., 2016; Smith & Smith, 2000; Sokal & Katz, 2015); instead, they focused on the challenges associated with feeling spread too thin to meet student needs. The teachers believed considerations for class size and complexity would create opportunities to

work with students one-on-one and have a manageable workload that would foster a better work-life balance.

Teachers also wished for changes to their education. Teachers wished they had time for mentoring or collaborative time to improve their skills and confidence in inclusive education. This aligns with the literature on the positive impact collaboration has on the implementation of inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Consistent with the study by Ely (2013), teachers wished for additional training as in-service teachers. In the current study, the teachers identified two specific types of professional development opportunities they would like to attend, including condition-specific (e.g., training on Tourette Syndrome) and ongoing school-wide training. The teachers also mentioned wanting changes to be made to teacher education programs so that all pre-service teachers would have practical time in inclusive classrooms and practical coursework in inclusive education. The teachers identified that this would provide new teachers with tools that could support them in teaching in inclusive classrooms and enter these classrooms more positively. This is consistent with the literature on the limited information available in teacher education training programs on inclusive education (McCrimmon, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2000).

Similarly, Forlin and Chambers (2011) found that pre-service teachers' knowledge and confidence in inclusive education increased as a result of a 39-hour course that discussed inclusive education policies and strategies. Notably, the authors of this article mentioned concerns surrounding ethical considerations in increasing pre-service teachers' stress and concerns about inclusive while increasing their knowledge and confidence without providing them additional opportunities to learn strategies and skills. While the concerns from Forlin and Chambers are valid, the results from this current study suggest that in-service teachers currently

experience concerns about implementing inclusive education, partly related to not receiving training in their teacher education programs. The teachers specifically identified that inclusive education training before graduating from their teaching programs would impact their inclusive education implementation. Similarly, most of the teachers mentioned continued education and professional development, which has helped them gain skills and strategies to support their inclusive education implementation.

Further, teachers have a professional obligation to obtain ongoing professional development documented through a professional growth plan (ATA, 2020). Therefore, in Alberta, the concerns mentioned by Forlin and Chambers surrounding adding pre-service education on inclusive education due to increasing stress and concerns are partially addressed by teachers and the teaching association. Nonetheless, inclusive education as a concept does not have a consistent research base. Therefore, it may be more useful for programs to focus on teaching evidence-based strategies and practices instead of inclusive education concepts.

The teachers wanted an increase of resources to support them in inclusive education. Specifically, teachers wanted access to resources, such as chewable toys for students, and more information regarding what services were available to the teachers. Teachers in other studies have identified that resources help them implement inclusive education (Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013), so it is fitting that teachers would wish for these resources.

Teachers also wished for improvements to their physical classrooms. This was a factor not mentioned in the literature about inclusive education. This may be because the physical classroom does not directly relate to inclusive education, rather it relates to general education. The current study's teachers specifically wanted changes to be made to better support their students by having larger classrooms to allow students to move around, have room for breakout

spaces, and have room for flexible seating options. Additionally, teachers mentioned some basic features that would benefit their students, including having access to sinks, having air conditioning, and having classrooms with windows. Research on classroom designs supports many of the components the teachers in the current study have discussed, noting significant improvements in student and teacher performance when classrooms are open and have flexible arrangements (Imms & Byers, 2017).

Teachers wished for more time to build and improve their relationships with stakeholders (e.g., administrators, community supports, etc.), students, and parents. While not explicitly addressed in the literature, teachers have indicated building relationships with students supports inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013). Similarly, research has also noted that positive impact teacher-student relationships have on student behaviour and classroom engagement (Perry, 2009).

In the current study, teachers wanted an increased focus on teacher wellness due to the additional demands that prevented them from achieving such balance. Although teachers in the literature did not explicitly express this, it was implied through several studies. For example, Carrington and colleagues (2016) identified the additional responsibilities put on teachers in inclusive education classrooms, and Ely (2013) noted that teachers wanted additional time to plan, leading to a better work-life balance of teachers.

Teachers wished for more supports for families. They noted many of the children they work with come from parents who are also struggling and wished there were more community services to support the entire family. Again, this sentiment was not mentioned explicitly in the literature; however, teachers in other studies identified the importance of family involvement in inclusive education (Becker et al., 2000; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013).

Teachers in the current study also wished that society would better understand the expectations teachers need to meet in the classroom. This was another factor not indicated in the literature. Although not mentioned in the literature, this factor may be related to inclusive education's ideals versus realities (Haug, 2017; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020; Kavale & Forness, 2000). As mentioned in the hindering category on feeling pressure from society, teachers felt they are being held up to unachievable standards.

The final wish list factor identified was for less paperwork. This factor aligns with research about the additional responsibilities teachers have when they teach inclusive classrooms (Carrington et al., 2016; Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005). Although these studies have not mentioned paperwork specifically, they have mentioned that planning and program development responsibilities are greater in inclusive classrooms than in regular education classrooms (Carrington et al., 2016).

Underlying Emphasis: Using Band-Aids in Education

Despite their definitions of inclusive education, many of the teachers in this study have alluded that inclusive education may not be for all students. Rather, it may be for students who have more mild concerns that will benefit from modification to teachers' already established practices, as opposed to students with severe learning needs who may have significant challenges accessing programming or who require intensive interventions beyond the scope of a classroom teacher (e.g., life skills). Teachers have mentioned the challenges associated with supporting students with severe medical, learning, or behavioural needs in the classroom; however, they have also not demonstrated clear skills in supporting students with even mild needs in the classroom. Therefore, improving inclusive education may not be as simple as only including students with mild exceptionalities in the classroom; rather, inclusive education would benefit

from a foundational shift to ensure students are truly supported.

Teachers in the current study reported an average of moderate to high ratings of their confidence in inclusive education. Research has suggested that most teachers report low confidence in teaching students with exceptionalities (DeBoer, 2012). Although ratings from the current study were higher than previous studies, their comments regarding inclusive education suggest teachers actually feel unable to meet student needs in the current classroom composition in inclusive education. Teachers discussed feeling as though they were not meeting the needs of students in the classroom, which was deeply upsetting to them. They described the additional steps they took to try to provide support to all of their students, even when they acknowledged that their skill set did not lend itself to providing these supports. The teachers described the extra time they put into their jobs and the increasing demands and pressures they have felt over their careers. It was evident from this study that teachers care and are committed to supporting their students; however, this incongruence suggests teachers feel confident in doing a job under circumstances that prevents them from doing it well.

While teachers rated their confidence as moderate to high, there was a lack of conversation surrounding inclusive education pedagogy. Of the pedagogy mentioned, much of it referred to general good teaching practices unspecific to inclusive education, such as building relationships, linking concepts together, manipulatives, think time, movement, and being creative and engaging. While necessary in education, these practices alone do not cover the intricacies required in inclusive education. Students with exceptionalities often require instruction that is different from their typically developing peers, which Alberta Education recognizes through their publications on teaching students with certain exceptionalities (e.g., Alberta Education, 2006; Alberta Learning, 2002). These differences in instructional strategies can be useful for typically

developing students, but students with exceptionalities must be at the forefront.

When teachers in the current study did describe specific practices surrounding students with exceptionalities, they mentioned practices that have shown to be ineffective in supporting students (e.g., coloured transparencies). In their descriptions of what supports inclusive education, teachers did not describe interventions or modifications to support students, which research has shown to be effective and necessary for students with exceptionalities (Berkeley et al., 2009). For example, there was no mention of Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, explicit and systematic instruction, working towards mastery of concepts, frequently practicing targeted skills, or frequent assessment (Mitchell, 2014).

In fact, there was no indication from teachers how they measured student progress or the effectiveness of their strategies. This is consistent with the literature, in which only McLeskey's and colleagues' (2013) study mentioned progress monitoring. Progress monitoring data provides evidence of whether strategies or interventions are working and research has shown that when student progress is monitored students tend to learn more (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2002; McLeskley et al., 2013). Without progress monitoring data, it is unclear whether the student supports effectively helps student learning or behaviour. Therefore, it is unclear whether the current study's teachers have any means to judge whether their teaching strategies are effective for their students or if they are implementing evidence-based strategies that are specific to students with exceptionalities. This suggests teachers do not have a thorough understanding of what it takes to support students with exceptionalities.

This has significant implications as a third of the teachers mentioned that inclusive education classrooms ensured student needs were met. Despite explicitly stating this, many teachers also mentioned that they felt unable to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms

and no teachers mentioned how they determined whether or not students were making progress. Across Canada, there are many required documents that are intended to support students in inclusive education. For example, Individualized Program/Education Plans (IPP/IEP) requires teachers to consider the data available about students, including their strengths and areas of need and to use this information to generate goals while monitoring student progress towards these goals. Essentially, these legally required documents require teachers to monitor student progress, and yet it was not mentioned in this study. These discrepancies are profoundly concerning and further emphasize that inclusive education prioritizes the ethical and moral rhetoric over supporting student growth, which goes against the moral and ethical standards the inclusive education movement intended to address.

In their discussions of aspects that hinder or could help inclusive education, teachers often wanted support that would provide straightforward solutions to the concerns in their classrooms. In many ways, the critical incidents the teachers mentioned throughout the study were merely things that would help teachers get through the day or year rather than supporting students to thrive in their classrooms. In the interviews, teachers were limitedly reflective of the impact of their own practices. It appears teachers are in survival mode, meaning that teachers are working moment by moment rather than thinking about the future and building capacity. In fact, the way education is structured often fosters this way of thinking as teachers are typically only with a group of students for one year. This may encourage teachers to just make it through the year, rather than holistically and reflectively think about the trajectory of their students throughout their education. Many of the aspects teachers mentioned offered temporary relief for their most immediate concerns, as opposed to practices that are sustainable, ongoing, and most of all effective for students.

This was evident in the teacher's discussion about personnel. Teachers mentioned the need for more support from general personnel, as well as specifically named personnel. Although variable among the teachers, some spoke of this support as having the additional person help students with exceptionalities access the curriculum or programming. This is concerning as this is the role of a teacher, not of unnamed personnel. Similarly, teachers wanted more EAs who would support students with severe needs. Notably, a third of the teachers identified the challenges in working with EAs who were less competent or not trained, and the potential for their work to be ineffective with students. While classroom helpers and EAs may provide support to inclusive education classrooms, it is important to consider their scope and role in such classrooms. Research has shown that EAs are heavily relied upon in supporting students with exceptionalities in inclusive classrooms despite not being adequately trained to do so (Bowles, 2017; Giangreco, 2010; Webster, 2010). In other words, in inclusive education, often the least qualified personnel are working with the most complex students (Brenton, 2010). Therefore, in many ways providing more EAs or untrained helpers may do more harm than good to inclusive education. Further, this practice implies low value towards supporting and educating students with complex needs and exemplifies the limited reflection of teachers in inclusive education as there was no consideration in changing the programming to help students access it.

Similar to EAs, teachers have suggested the need for more time with specialists; however, teachers' descriptions of the role of specialists also suggest they are looking for quick solutions rather than an overarching restructuring of their practices. Teachers mentioned often having to "fill the gap" of specialists in their classroom but fail to recognize the scope of their roles. It is ill-informed of teachers to state that their limited experiences through consultation with professionals and possibly some professional development could take the place of a

professional with a graduate degree in their area of specialization. Much like inclusive education, it is important to realize that teachers cannot be everything for everyone without watering down the profession to the point where it is meaningless. Rather, what is more supportive is to have teachers consult with specialists about how their teaching practices can support students with exceptionalities in their classroom. For example, in Speech and Language services, there is individual and small group work an SLP can do with students to improve their speech and language skills, but the teacher also has to learn how to work with the skills and abilities that student presents with when they enter their classrooms. Therefore, although having more specialists would support student development, it is unlikely to have a direct impact on teachers' roles in the classroom.

Teachers also described the role of professional development in supporting inclusive education; however, much of the professional development teachers discussed seemed to be short sessions that target specific conditions as opposed to underlying understandings of teaching students with exceptionalities. The professional development described in this study was often limited, short sessions, which may not have a lasting impact on teaching practices without post-session follow-up (Gradel & Edson, 2011). This was especially interesting considering the limited understanding teachers have reported about inclusive education. In many ways, teachers seemed to be trying to fill a toolbox that was riddled with holes. Without this underlying understanding of inclusive education, the strategies and practices that teachers are seeking are less effective and meaningful.

Another aspect to consider is teachers' attribution of their concerns. Teachers in the current study attributed their concerns to external factors. While there are certainly concerns surrounding the supports provided in inclusive education, as evidenced by the examples above,

teachers would also benefit from additional critical self-reflection about their teaching practices in inclusive education. This type of self-reflection requires teachers to be out of survival mode, which requires time. In the current study, teachers mentioned lack of time as a hindering critical incident; however, teachers wanted more time to get more work completed. This suggests that simply providing teachers additional time will not increase self-reflection or necessarily improve teaching practices; rather, teachers will likely fill their time with tasks they feel need to be completed immediately. Therefore, more consideration needs to be made regarding how to pull teachers out of survival mode and foster self-reflection in education.

Overall, many of the areas teachers noted as hindering inclusive education may come from a place of trying to throw more resources at a problem rather than fixing the underlying issues. Anecdotally, this would be similar to putting a band-aid on a bullet hole. There were many aspects within the study that emphasize the need for a foundational shift to education. This was apparent in the incongruence between teachers' ratings of their confidence and the practices they reported, teachers' focus on additional resources rather than a restructuring of resources, and the aspects that were evidently missing from their interviews. Rather than investing in more EAs, specialists, and professional development, it may be more beneficial for a restructuring of the education system. This new system should account for and acknowledge that teachers cannot be expected to be both a regular and special education teacher. This new system should move from a passive approach acclaiming moral and ethical rhetoric to an approach that actively employs this rhetoric through similarly valuing student learning and growth for all students, including students with exceptionalities.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn from this study. Overall, previous research and this

study emphasize that the concept of inclusive education is poorly defined, researched, and implemented. Nonetheless, there were new findings from the project that differ from the current understanding of inclusive education. Firstly, in examining the helping critical incidents, new findings on teachers' experience outside of education expand the current understanding of roles teachers draw from in teaching inclusive education. Under hindering critical incidents, the conceptualization of challenges with the class composition is consistent with previous research; however, the participants in the current study focused less on the challenges associated with behavioural needs in the classroom, as previous research has, and has an increased focus on the challenges associated with the overall range of needs in the classroom. Lastly, under wish list factors, the findings surrounding improvements teachers would like to their physical classrooms and an increased societal understanding of the expectations of teachers highlights new needs in the implementation of inclusive education.

The impact of this study and subsequent implications have been conceptualized from two perspectives: educational shifts and educational restructuring. The educational shifts suggested seek to make small changes to the existing education system (inclusive education) by considering the implications from this study individually. An education restructuring considers a wider and generally more complex foundational change in the education system based on research and focuses on student learning and development. There are many key stakeholders to consider in these perspectives, including policymakers, teacher training programs, teachers, and specialists. Especially considering the implications and potential impact of small individual changes versus large systemic changes, it is important to consider how each of these stakeholders are interconnected. Therefore, this section is organized based on large systems changes from policymakers and teacher training programs that will flow into implications for smaller groups,

including teachers and specialists.

Educational Shifts

Several educational shifts are suggested from the findings in this study, including shifts in pre-service education programs, increased investment in personnel including EAs and specialists, reconsideration on class sizes, and specialists to ensure their recommendations fit the classroom. Within the current study, teachers identified that they wish for pre-service education programs to emphasize supporting students with exceptionalities in their classrooms. Findings from Forlin and Chambers (2011) and McCrimmon (2015) have suggested that pre-service education programs that include one course in inclusion significantly improve pre-service teachers' knowledge and confidence in implementing inclusive education. Although the authors express concerns about the association between increased knowledge and confidence and increased stress and concerns about inclusion, the current study's teachers have highlighted the benefit of having these opportunities in their pre-service education programs. It is important to acknowledge, however, the participants in this study still had significant gaps in how they described their practice in inclusive education. Therefore, while it would be beneficial for teacher training programs to include at least a course, or preferably several courses, in teaching pre-service teachers about supporting students with exceptionalities in their classrooms, it is also important to consider the emphasis of these courses.

Further, considering the paucity of evidence-based practices that teachers in the current study identified as helping them implement inclusive education, it would be beneficial for these courses to focus on specific teaching strategies to support students with exceptionalities, such as the role of explicit instruction, student mastery, and progress monitoring. Based on the current study results, we know that teachers seek additional information after their pre-service education

programs. Another way these training programs may support pre-service teachers is by providing information about how and where teachers can access this type of information and provide training on critically examining information to avoid the use of ineffective strategies in teaching students in inclusive education.

Beyond pre-service education programs, there are also steps policymakers can take to support the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers frequently commented on the impact that class size and diversity have on implementing inclusive education. Specifically, large class sizes and the complexity of these classes impacted inclusive education as the teachers were spread too thin between students and teachers found themselves having to triage student learning. This, in and of itself, was impactful for teachers as it made them feel less confident in their teaching ability. Specifically, teachers mentioned the interaction of these components that made it challenging for them to ensure that students were adequately supported in their classrooms. It would be beneficial for policymakers to reassess current class size numbers to ensure considerations are being made for the level of complexity students with exceptionalities bring to the inclusive education classroom and ensure that they can be better supported. Investment in personnel could also address the concerns surrounding large class sizes.

The most common helping, hindering, and wish list factor was the concept of personnel support within the current study. Overall, teachers most commonly wished for more support from personnel, more specifically, EAs. The teachers suggested that investment in additional personnel would help them better support students in the classroom to ensure their needs would be met. While EAs play an important role in supporting inclusive education, teachers must consider their EAs' roles and scopes in inclusive education. Teachers must be the ones who create and support programming for students with exceptionalities through consultation with

credible sources.

Further, teachers noted that support from specialists, including school psychologists, was among the helping factors in implementing inclusive education. Teachers identified that the specialists provided specific information on supporting students in inclusive classrooms and direct services. Specifically, teachers found the strategies and different perspectives useful. By investing in personnel, policymakers may help enhance teaching in inclusive education classrooms and help improve the support provided to students with exceptionalities.

While teachers noted their utility, there are some areas in which these specialists can do better to support teachers directly. A direct action that specialists can take in their practice is to ensure their recommendations for individual students reflect the classroom environment as a whole. Although implementing new practices is challenging, it is possible for teachers to make small adjustments to their classrooms and teaching styles using evidence-based strategies. This may involve completing classroom observations or discussing recommendations with teachers to ensure the feasibility of them. An important consideration, however, is that strategies alone are not enough to support students with exceptionalities. We must also consider the implementation of evidence-based interventions. Many evidence-based interventions, while shown to be effective, require intensive instruction that may not be available or prioritized in the current education system (Rathvon, 2008). Considering school psychologists' scope of practice in data-based decision making, consultation, interventions, and school-wide practices (NASP, 2020), they can also advocate for additional intervention services through their school division by proposing intervention models to stakeholders with supporting research and data.

Educational Restructuring

Although educational shifts are beneficial in making small changes to existing education

systems, educational restructuring may be the most impactful way to support students and teachers. It is important to note that while many of the educational shifts can be used to drive educational restructuring, the emphasis of restructuring is to revise Alberta's education system. This educational restructuring could take many forms.

As researchers have noted, the idea of inclusive education has merit; however, the current state of education does not provide sufficient evidence that inclusive education adequately addresses students' needs with exceptionalities (Lindsay, 2007). Therefore, it may be time for educational policy to shift into a new form of education that values moral and ethical considerations by ensuring the educational needs of students with exceptionalities can be met. For example, Hornby (2015) has suggested the concept of Inclusive Special Education may be better suited to replace inclusive education with a greater focus on evidence-based supports to meet student needs in the most inclusive setting possible. Notably, this practice would involve special education teachers, who specialize in supporting students with exceptionalities within the broader classroom and in specialized programs (Takala et al., 2009).

Teachers are essential in implementing inclusive education as they are the ones working with students daily. Teachers have outlined several helping and hindering factors that may help inclusive education; however, they have not demonstrated a clear understanding of the support students with exceptionalities in their classrooms require. It would be beneficial for teacher education programs to address this concern, as mentioned in the educational shifts section, but it is also important for practicing teachers to improve their own practices. As a helping factor, teachers identified specific strategies that support them in inclusive education; however, the strategies identified were either not evidence-based or were more of general good teaching practices that did not specifically support students with exceptionalities in their classrooms.

Therefore, teachers must consider the targeted strategies and teaching practices in their classrooms to ensure they are effective for students with exceptionalities. In doing so, teachers must consider their sources of information to ensure they are using the most up-to-date evidence-based practices in relation to pedagogy for students with exceptionalities. Further, rather than solely focusing on learning about specific strategies in supporting students with exceptionalities, it may be beneficial for practicing teachers to reflect on their current teaching practices to ensure the foundation of their teaching supports students with exceptionalities.

Specialists can also advocate for changes to their services that are not in their direct control. For example, teachers mentioned the benefits of having specialists who are part of the school. While many specialists work within schools, other school boards contract their services through other service providers or house them within a central office. Although specialists may have less control, they can advocate for their professions' utility within schools. Similarly, teachers mentioned wishing for more direct services for students with more severe needs. Again, specialists often have less control over their caseload but could advocate for more direct support. Finally, teachers also found challenges with support available for students who required specialist support but were not severe enough to receive this level of support.

Study Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths and limitations that the current study presented. First, this study included teachers with a range of experience in terms of their years of experience, grades taught, and subjects taught. The benefit of this diversity is that the results are not exclusive to teachers in a certain stage of their career or teachers of a certain grade.

Much of the inclusive education implementation literature has focused on school divisions or schools that have been identified as having good policies, who have been deemed to

be successful in implementing inclusive education, or who have staff considered to be experts in inclusive education (Bešić et al., 2017; Lyons et al., 2016; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' experiences in Alberta in implementing inclusive education, regardless of whether they considered themselves experts or successful. While some teachers identified high confidence in implementing inclusive education, there was a range of confidence levels among the teachers in this study, and several factors impacted their confidence.

Within the study, there were some methodological limitations. Due to the ever-evolving changes in education when the data was collected, the interviews were completed in rapid succession. This created challenges in having an expert in ECIT review the interviews conducted and provide feedback. Although this would have been valuable, I was concerned with ensuring the context did not shift during the collection. To ensure interview fidelity, I reviewed the interviews to ensure I was not asking leading questions. Nonetheless, it would have been meaningful and useful to have an expert to have reviewed my interviews.

Another methodological limitation occurred in trying to have the categories reviewed by experts in the field. Although several experts were contacted, only one of four responded and was available to review the categories. In ECIT, Butterfield and colleagues (2009) encourage the categories to be reviewed by several experts to increase their credibility. The expert who reviewed the categories agreed with all of them; however, the study would have been better supported if the categories had gone through additional reviews by experts.

Another methodological limitation related to the information initially provided to the participants about what to expect for the interview. As suggested by Butterfield and colleagues (2009), I provided the participants with an overview of the study, including reviewing the research questions before beginning the first interview. While the study had four research

questions, multiple questions were asked in the interview's contextual section, including what inclusive education meant to participants and what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like. It appears some participants may have assumed the question related to what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like as the beginning of the collection of the helping incidents. For the question of what a successful inclusive education classroom looked like, a few participants began describing factors that help them in inclusive education, such as having support from people. Although these factors were clarified as to whether participants were referring to helping factors, this confusion makes it challenging to compare how teachers described inclusive education and how they describe successful inclusive education.

Another limitation of the current study was that it included teachers who were either acting in different education roles or were not currently teaching. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the inclusion criteria to participate in the study included certified teachers in Alberta who had taught in at least one classroom with diverse learners for a minimum of one school year and had taught or were currently teaching grades one to six in Alberta. This meant that teachers who currently or in the past had taught could participate in the study, which was the case for three participants (P7, P5, and P12). As mentioned in Chapter 4, P5 was a home-school facilitator who was teaching grade 3 and 4 and also coordinated services for special education, P7 was a System's Principal who oversaw all of the programming for students in preschool and kindergarten, and P12 had been a teacher for 11 years but was not currently teaching as she was pursuing a graduate degree full-time. Although these participants met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study, it is also possible that they could have different perspectives on inclusive education due to their different roles. However, in analyzing the data, there were no apparent differences among the critical incidents and wish list factors identified by these three participants and the

other participants, so they were included in the final analysis.

Finally, although not a limitation of the study itself, considering the differences between teachers' quantitative ratings of their confidence and their qualitative descriptions of their challenges, it would have been beneficial to follow up with the participants about their confidence after completing the interview. This would have clarified whether teachers' confidence ratings shifted due to exploration of the factors that help, hinder, and what they would wish for in inclusive education.

Recommendations for Future Research

As this study was exploratory, it will be beneficial for future research to follow up on the nuances identified in this study. Although it was intended to be addressed in this study, it will be beneficial to better understand how teachers define inclusive education versus how they envision a successful inclusive education classroom. Other nuances include teachers' discussion of parental involvement in inclusive education, the utility of professional development, societal expectations of teachers in inclusive education, the impact of funding structures on inclusive education, and teaching strategies used in inclusive education. It will also be beneficial for future research to explore new education systems, such as Inclusive Special Education.

As mentioned throughout this document, the research on and overall conceptualization of inclusive education varies greatly. While I intended to gauge the differences between teacher's explicit definitions and their descriptions of inclusive education, teachers in the current study may have confused the question about successful inclusive education to what helps them in implementing inclusive education. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to further explore these differences about how teachers define inclusive education and what differences exist between the definition and the practice of implementing inclusive education.

Within the current study, teachers tended to discuss parental involvement to support their practice instead of viewing it as an integral part of inclusive education. Previous research has found that teachers discuss parental involvement as a collaborative process where all perspectives can be openly shared and regarded (Lyons et al., 2016). The disparity between these findings suggests that future research should examine these findings more deeply to examine the relationship between parents and teachers in inclusive education.

Although the current study's teachers discussed the utility of ongoing professional development in their implementation of inclusive education, they did not mention how professional development helped them. Similarly, teachers discussed the impact the experiences outside formal educational experiences had on their implementation of inclusive education but did not provide additional information on how it helped them. It is unclear whether these experiences have a measurable difference in changing teachers' understanding in both cases. Future research would be well suited to explore the impact of ongoing professional development and experiences outside of education have on inclusive education.

Future research should also examine the expectations of society on teachers in inclusive education. As mentioned in the current study, teachers expressed concerns surrounding perceived pressures from parents and school boards to provide an educational experience that they viewed as unrealistic. While this research describes the divide between idealistic versus realistic inclusive education, few studies have examined this concept beyond a theoretical sense.

Considering the changes by Alberta Education to the funding structure, in which funding for inclusive education is no longer tied to individual students, concerns have been raised by researchers such as Williamson and Gilham (2017), as well as by one of the participants in the current study. While in the current study, P5 mentioned that funding that is predictable and used

ethically helps implement inclusive education, no research has looked into the impact of funding structures on the implementation of inclusion.

The teachers mentioned specific strategies that supported their implementation of inclusive education; however, many of these were general good teaching practices that were not specific to inclusive education. It will be beneficial for future research to explore what strategies and teaching practices teachers employ in inclusive education to more thoroughly guide the next steps in the movement from inclusive education into a new education system.

Finally, it will also be beneficial for future studies to examine the impact of implementing a new education system, such as Inclusive Special Education. For example, it would be useful to pilot such a system to determine the impact on students learning and social-emotional wellbeing, teachers' workloads, and the concerns mentioned in this study. In doing so, this information could be used to more broadly implement an education system based on data and evidence instead of rhetoric that feels good.

Conclusions

Despite the lack of evidence supporting its effectiveness, students across Alberta are currently educated through inclusive education classrooms, with teachers being responsible for its day-to-day implementation. The current study sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining helping and hindering critical incidents and wish list factors to implement inclusive education. Several new findings were identified as factors that help and hinder the implementation of inclusive education and factors that teachers wished for. The current study's findings continue to support that inclusive education, both as a concept and practice, is not universally agreed upon by teachers. Teachers also tend to view parental involvement, contrary to previous research, as transactional rather than collaborative. The findings also supported that

teacher training programs do not provide sufficient training in inclusive education; however, teachers also mentioned that they seek additional educational opportunities after training programs. The last finding suggests that teachers fear inclusive education may not support their students without additional support provided, such as support from other personnel. Considering the information together, providing this additional support may not be as simple as having only additional people in schools. Rather, it may be beneficial to reconceptualize inclusive education through educational shifts or educational restructuring of the current system altogether. Future research would be well suited to examine new elements identified in this study, such as parental involvement in inclusive education, the role of previous experiences in teaching inclusive education, and the impact of funding structure. Further, it would be beneficial for future research to explore the implementation of a new educational structure, such as Inclusive Special Education. Overall, this study provided information about the current implementation of inclusive education by examining the factors that help and hinder inclusive education and what factors teachers wish they had to support them. This information is essential to understand the current state of inclusive education and determine how to better support teachers and students.

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Appendix A: Chart on Studies

Citation	Participant Selection	Definition of Inclusion	Location
Bešić et al., 2016	Purposeful selection of schools by liaisons for special education, then participants selected by headmasters (principals)	Inclusive education "emphasises the need to change the school system in order to meet the needs of all students" (p. 330) "Therefore, inclusion can be understood as a process which embodies different ways of responding to the diverse needs of every child. An inclusive school is 'one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state' (Ainscow and Miles 2008, 20)." (p. 330)	Austria
Carrington et al., 2016	Teachers recruited based on students who were enrolled in an early intervention program	"Inclusive education involves removing the barriers to engagement and participation of children with disabilities in regular classrooms" (p.2)	USA
Ely, 2013	Recruitment from social networking websites Purposeful recruitment of participants who met criteria	"Inclusion is a setting within public schools that occurs in the general education classroom where special education students are instructed for all or part of their day" (p. 20)	USA
Idol, 2006	Purposeful selection: Schools selected by executive director of special education programs for a school district	All students educated in general education 100% of the day	USA
Lyons et al., 2016	Purposeful selection: Directors of Education identified schools that "demonstrate	All children are provided the opportunity to be educated within the general education setting with support	Saskatchewan, Canada

	successful implementation of inclusive education" (p. 892)	"An inclusive setting is a supportive, caring and responsive community where all students are included, regardless of socioeconomic status, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, or abilities" (p. 893)	
McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013	Purposeful selection of one school district	"Schools that claim to follow an inclusive model take steps to ensure that all students are welcomed, valued, and learn together in regular education classrooms, regardless of their particular learning characteristics and needs. In inclusive classrooms, teachers adapt their instructional practices so that all students, including students with special learning needs, achieve in ways that are meaningful" (p. 197)	Rural Alberta, Canada
McLeskey et al., 2014	Purposeful selection based on a set of criteria. Ultimately the school was selected based on recommendations as well as meeting the criteria.	Inclusive education is a "setting in which students with disabilities were included in general education classrooms at a level that was well above the local district and state averages, and achievement levels for students with disabilities and those who struggle in core content areas (reading and mathematics) that were well above district and state averages" (p. 60)	Florida, USA
Smith & Smith, 2000	Purposeful selection of school district but random selection of teachers to be interviewed	"This is a 'pro-inclusion,' rather than a full-inclusion school district. In a full-inclusion district, '... all children with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, will be educated in general education: in a full inclusion system, separate special education placements would no longer exist' (Hocutt, 1996, p. 79). In a pro-inclusion district inclusion is the preferred choice whenever possible and appropriate, decided on a case-by-case basis" (p. 162)	Nebraska, USA
Vaz et al., 2015	Survey data from teachers across Australia	"Inclusion is based on the concept of social justice; wherein all students are entitled to equal access to all educational opportunities, irrespective of disability or any form of disadvantage" (p. 2)	Australia

Appendix B: Interview 1 Guide

(Adapted from Butterfield et al., 2009)

Participant #: _____ Date: _____

Interview Start Time: _____

1. Introduction

    a. I am investigating teachers' experiences in teaching inclusive education classrooms. This is the first of two interviews. The purpose of this interview is to collect information about experiences or factors that stand out in your mind when teaching in inclusive education settings. It is important for me to truly understand your perspective; therefore I may ask clarifying questions to ensure I understand. This interview should take about 60 to 90 minutes of your time.

    b. Do you have any questions before we get started?

    c. Informed consent will be completed.
      i. Confirm consent
        1. Research Questions
          a. 1. How do teachers define inclusive education?
          b. 2. What factors support teachers in implementing inclusive education?
          c. 3. What factors detract from teachers implementing inclusive education?
          d. 4. What, if any, factors warrant further investigation in supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education?
        2. Type of info collected
          a. Basic demographic information – kept confidential
          b. Information about your teaching experience – collected at end of interview
        3. Risks & Benefits
          a. Risks – Should be no greater than what would experience in everyday life, if experience stress from this interview you are encouraged to access services through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
          b. Benefits – no direct benefits, however results will be used to advocate for changes or maintenance to inclusive education; gift cards, $10 per interview (up to two), entered to win $100 gift card
        4. Consent to record

RECORD

2. Contextual Component

a. As I mentioned, this study is about inclusive education. To get started, what does inclusive education mean to you?

b. What does a successful inclusive education classroom look like?

c. How confident do you feel with teaching in an inclusive education classroom on a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident)?

d. Has your confidence changed over the years? If yes, how?

3. *Critical Incident Component*

a. What has helped you in implementing inclusive education?

   i. Probes: What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you? Can you provide a specific example where this factor helped?

Helpful Factor	Importance of Factor	Example

b. What factors have made it more difficult for you to implement inclusive education?

   i. Probes: What kinds of factors have happened that have made it harder? How did it impact you? Can you provide a specific example of this factor?

Hindering Factor	Importance of Factor	Example

c. We've talked about what's helped you (name them), and some things that have made it more difficult for you (name them). **Are there other things that would help you to teach in an inclusive classroom? (Alternative question: I wonder what else might be helpful to you that you haven't had access to?)**

   i. Probes: What kinds of factors might be helpful? How do you think it would impact you? Can you provide a specific example of how this factor might be helpful?

Wish List Factor	Importance of Factor	Example

4. *Demographic Component*

    a. Current grade(s) you are teaching

    b. Subject (s) currently taught

    c. Length of time in current grade

    d. Grades taught in past

    e. Number of years as a teacher

STOP RECORDING

Reminder of second follow up interview
- Will analyze information and sort them into categories, will send these categories to you
- Intent of interview is:
  - To clarify any questions
  - To ensure factors identified accurately reflect our conversation
  - To ensure factors are categorized appropriately

Gift Card

Where from: _____

How would you like it sent?

Mailed: _____

Emailed: _____

Thank you!!!

Interview End Time: _____   Length of interview: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Appendix C: Interview 2 Guide

Document A – Extracted CI's and WL Items
- Are the helping/hindering CI's and WL items correct?
- Is anything missing?
- Is there anything that needs revising?
- Do you have any other comments?

Document B – Categories
- Do the category headings make sense to you?
- Do the category headings capture your experience and the meaning that the incident or factor had for you?
- Are there any incidents in the categories that do not appear to fit from your perspective? If so, where do you think they belong?

Document C – Follow up Items

Item 1:

Other:

What would you like as your final gift card?

Would you like to be entered to win a $100 gift card?

Appendix D: New Critical Incident or Factors Tracking Table

(Adapted from Butterfield et al., 2009)

Date of CI/WL Extraction	Participant Number	Date Categorized	Number of New Critical Incidents and Factors		
			Helping Critical Incidents	Hindering Critical Incidents	Wish List Factors
May 30, 2020	P4	June 1, 2020	5	7	4
May 31, 2020	P7	June 1, 2020	0	1	2
May 31, 2020	P5	June 1, 2020	4	2	3
June 2, 2020	P2	June 6, 7, 2020	1	2	1
June 2, 2020	P3	June 6, 7, 2020	1	1	0
June 4, 2020	P14	June 6, 7, 2020	1	0	2
June 19, 20, 2020	P9	June 8, 2020	0	0	1
June 19, 20, 2020	P1	June 8, 2020	0	1	0
June 19, 20, 2020	P10	June 18, 2020	1	1	0
June 21, 2020	P12	June 20, 2020	0	0	0
June 21, 2020	P13	June 20, 2020	0	0	0
June 21, 2020	P8	June 20, 2020	0	0	0