

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Teaching and Leadership - Dissertations

School of Education

12-2012

Whole-School Inclusive Reform: "It's What's Best for Kids"

Nicole M. DeClouette
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/tl_etd



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

DeClouette, Nicole M., "Whole-School Inclusive Reform: "It's What's Best for Kids"" (2012). *Teaching and Leadership - Dissertations*. 242.

https://surface.syr.edu/tl_etd/242

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching and Leadership - Dissertations by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigates a school and university inclusive reform project, called the All Means All Project, and how it is understood and experienced by teachers and administrators at Kennedy School, a K-8 school in the northeast United States. The All Means All Project began when two university professors called into question the practice of placing students with disabilities in segregated special classrooms. Their goal was to create a collaborative, multi-dimensional approach to providing all students with access to rigorous academic instruction and promoting a sense of belonging through students' full-time membership in general education classrooms. This reform was an immense undertaking because it required stakeholders to question their established policies and practices, engage in targeted professional development, and restructure the school's staff and students in order to close two self-contained special education classrooms.

With the support of the district superintendent, the director of special education, and Kennedy School administrators, the university professors began holding monthly, voluntary, afterschool meetings with school personnel. Because teachers and administrators are integral participants in this process, I sought to understand how they understood the project philosophically and how they experienced the reform process practically by utilizing participant observation and semi-structured interviews over a period of two years.

Restructuring of this magnitude disrupted the existing order of business at Kennedy School and some stakeholders struggled to critically reflect upon the meanings they brought to this transition. Dominant cultural narratives about students, and about schooling, were challenged as many teachers and administrators sought to replace these narratives with counter

narratives. This dissertation draws attention to the tendency for stakeholders to backslide into more familiar narratives when they feel challenged.

Eventually Kennedy School stakeholders recognized benefits for students and for teachers based on their restructuring efforts. They created a mantra about whole-school inclusive reform, “It’s what’s best for kids!” that seemed to sustain them through difficult days. Kennedy School stakeholders demonstrated the possibilities of what can happen when teachers and administrators are willing to take risks to educate all students.

WHOLE-SCHOOL INCLUSIVE REFORM: “IT’S WHAT’S BEST FOR KIDS.”

By

Nicole M. DeClouette

B.A., University of California Berkeley, 1997
C.A.S., Syracuse University, 2008

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Special Education.

Syracuse University
December 2012

Copyright 2012 Nicole Marie DeClouette

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This journey began so long ago at a small school named Jowonio, filled with the most amazing kids and teachers on earth. These individuals inspired me and changed the trajectory of my career in countless ways. Thank you to Zan for encouraging me to ask tough questions and for always making me feel smart enough to pursue a doctorate in special education. You are the best teacher I have ever known. To Ellen, thank you for your love and continued support for so many years.

I have been privileged to sit at the feet of great masters. Doug Biklen, you took me under your wings as you were teaching me to grow my own. I will forever be indebted to you for all that you have taught me. Steve Taylor, thank you for sharing your wisdom and your passion for taking a stand to do the right thing. Beth Ferri, thank you for always taking the time to read my work so carefully. I have always felt that the end product was much stronger after receiving your constructive feedback. The time and distance away from the three of you have made me much more appreciative of the time we spent together and the lessons you taught me. Each of you has been instrumental in shaping the professional I have become.

Special thanks to Julie and George for having the vision and implementing the reform that made this study possible.

Thank you to Dani, MaryAnn, and Jennifer for keeping me in line for so many years and for making sure that all my Ts were crossed and my Is were dotted.

Love and thanks to Terry, Sue, and Migdalia, for providing familial love and support when my family was so far away.

Thank you, Dad, for your daily phone calls; they have sustained me.

To Aunt Cindy and Aunt Kathy, thank you for always loving and supporting me and my family.

Michael, thank you for moving us to Syracuse so many years ago to pursue my dream, even though this has meant, at times, that your own dreams have been on hold.

Finally, to the loves of my life, Micaila and Tyra. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made. Thank you for always reminding me to search for the balance between chasing a dream and realizing what is truly important in my life.

This is dedicated to Wyatt...

because I was never there to advocate for the education you deserve.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Chapter One: Introduction: ‘Hey, we’re here. Don’t forget about us.’	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
The Context of Exclusion.....	3
Radical Idealism or the Next Logical Wave of Inclusion?.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Situating Myself.....	13
Research Questions.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	18
Overview of Chapters.....	20
Chapter Two: Review of Literature.....	22
Inclusive School District Reform	22
Individual School Reform.....	27
Role of School Leaders.....	31
Role of Teachers.....	34
Forms of Resistance.....	39
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	46
Qualitative Research Methods.....	46
Entrée	48
Context.....	50
Kennedy School.....	50

All Means All Project.....	51
Participants.....	51
Investigator Bias and Assumptions.....	52
Methods and Procedures.....	57
Choosing a Research Site.....	57
Observational Case Study.....	59
Data Collection.....	60
Participant Observation.....	60
In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews.....	62
Data Analysis.....	66
Chapter Four: “DeMarcus is ED...he is the label”: The Social Construction of (formerly) “Self-Contained Kids”	70
Self-Contained Classrooms, Students, and Teachers.....	70
Making Students Invisible.....	70
Low Expectations for Students and Difficult Expectations for Teachers..	78
Social Construction of Aggressive, Stigmatized, Clinical Identities.....	81
Preparing Students for Re-Structuring.....	86
When Self-Contained Classrooms are Closed.....	93
Self-Contained as an Identity.....	93
Different Kinds of Students Need Different Kinds of Treatment.....	98
Behavior.....	105
“They’re just not cut out for this. ”.....	109
Conclusion.....	111

Chapter Five: “They will end up where they belong.”: When the Vision Wanes.....	112
Skepticism from the Beginning.....	112
Turning Points.....	114
Monthly Planning Meetings.....	119
Backsliding.....	128
Contradictions.....	145
Discussion.....	146
Chapter Six: “It’s what’s best for kids.”: Stakeholders Recognize the Benefits of Whole-School Inclusive Reform... ..	149
Questioning Former Understandings and Practices.....	149
Administrators.....	149
Teachers.....	150
Instituting New Understandings and Practices.....	153
District Level Administrators.....	153
Kennedy School Administrators.....	156
Kennedy School Teachers.....	159
Collaborative Teaching.....	160
Attitude for Success.....	167
Communication.....	172
A Work in Progress.....	173
Benefits for Students.....	175
Social Gains.....	176
Academic Gains.....	187

Conclusion.....	190
Chapter Seven: Conclusion: “In order to raise the whole group, a little tension and pressure is a good thing.”.....	192
Barriers.....	193
Benefits.....	201
A Work in Progress.....	204
No Blueprint for Change	207
Looking to the Future.....	208
Appendices	
Appendix A Fieldnote Example #1 Questioning My Assumptions	215
Appendix B Fieldnote Example #2 Rendered Speechless.....	217
Appendix C Semi-Structured Interview Questions	219
Appendix D Preliminary List of Codes & Potential Interview Questions	221
Appendix E Codes and Sub-Codes.....	224
References.....	226
Biographical Data	238

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Number</i>	<i>Page</i>
Table 1: Research Participants.....	53
Table 2: Data Collection Activities	55

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Number</i>	<i>Page</i>
Figure 1: Model of Service Delivery Prior to Restructuring	122
Figure 2: Model of Service Delivery Following Restructuring	124

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: “Hey, we’re here. Don’t forget about us.”

Yolanda Anderson, a former special class teacher at Kennedy School¹, describes how she and her students were often “forgotten” by the rest of the school. Her class was regularly omitted from fieldtrip lists and her students heard school-wide assemblies begin in the gymnasium next to her classroom, without any notification or invitation for her class to join. Yolanda recalls crying her entire first year of teaching, “Thirteen year-old boys were throwing chairs and desks over. They told me they had four teachers in four years and I won’t stick around either.” That was nine years ago. Yolanda “stuck around” and, for the first time in her teaching career, Yolanda is no longer teaching in a disability-segregated classroom at Kennedy School. As a result of the All Means All Program, the object of this study, Yolanda is now teaching in an inclusive classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Many students with disabilities continue to be educated in special classrooms, and the debate over whether or not this is the best educational practice continues. Some researchers (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Lipsky & Gartner, 2004) have found that segregated education is both restrictive and inequitable while others (Kauffman, Lloyd, Baker, & Riedel, 1995; Lieberman, 1996) have argued that not all students can be educated effectively in general education classrooms. An increasing number of research findings suggest that segregated special education classroom placements and tracking of students by perceived ability are detrimental to *all* students

¹ All proper names (e.g., of participants’, school and school district, and university) have been changed to protect the identities of those individuals involved in this study.

(Villa & Thousand, 2005). Despite the common belief that “special” teachers have “special” knowledge to teach

“special” students in “special” settings, research suggests that segregated placements *do not* provide significant benefits for students with disabilities (Gartner & Lipsky, 2004). Instead, students in these restrictive settings are often denied access to engaging lessons and materials and instead exclusively taught functional life skills such as money skills and grocery store skills (Kliewer, 1998). Watered-down curriculum and decreased instructional time are also characteristic of these classrooms (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989).

Some individual schools, like Kennedy School, are calling segregated educational practices into question by restructuring to eliminate the use of special classrooms and integrating all students into general education classrooms. Kennedy School is a K-8 building in an urban school district. Prior to the 2008-09 school year, Kennedy had two segregated classrooms for students with disabilities. One classroom (with six students) comprised students ages 8 to 10 years and the other classroom (with 15 students) comprised students ages 11 to 13. Yolanda taught the classroom with 11 to 13 year students. When students turned 13, they “aged out” of the program, meaning that they transitioned to other middle school programs exclusively for students with disabilities, while their same-age peers remained at Kennedy. It was within this context that two nearby university professors introduced a three-year collaboration, The All Means All Project.

The All Means All Project is a collaborative approach to whole school reform that involves many key stakeholders, ranging from the district superintendent to the individual students who are moved to more inclusive classroom settings. The organizing principles undergirding the re-structuring efforts are that all students feel that they belong and are given

access to rigorous academics through differentiated instruction provided by co-teaching teams. This study is a qualitative investigation of the implementation of The All Means All Project and how it is taken-up by teachers and administrators in the school.

The Context of Exclusion

Disruptive behavior by students is often cited as one of the reasons for segregating students with disabilities. Kluth (2003) argues that when students are not meaningfully engaged in academics, and are not allowed access to adaptations and supports they need, they may engage in disruptive behavior. The behavior then becomes justification for the student's exclusion. Teachers spend an inordinate amount of time focusing on the problem rather than on ways to support the student. This cycle will not easily be broken with the existence of a segregated system that calls into question a student's belonging and that holds few academic expectations for students. Young children remain trapped in this cycle. Lori and Bill Granger (in Gartner & Lipsky, 2004, p. 200) describe the placement experience for their son:

The trap of Special Education was now open and waiting for the little boy. It is a beguiling trap. Children of Special Education are children of Small Expectations, not great ones. Little is expected and little is demanded. Gradually, these children—no matter their IQ level—learn to be cozy in the category of being “special.” They learn to be less than they are.

Lowered expectations may partly explain why the students in Kennedy's self-contained classrooms did not participate in district and state level assessments until the year after the classrooms were closed. Under these circumstances, with each passing year, the academic and social gaps increase between students in segregated settings and their peers in general education settings (Fitch, 2003; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

Kliewer (1998) notes, “Segregation (ironically) diverts tremendous amounts of resources toward structuring an existential location of hopelessness entrapping people whose very humanness is in question” (p. 4). Segregated placements become “hopeless” because of the stigma attached to these involuntary, restrictive, separate spaces and because of the inadequate curricula that focuses on training students into compliance (Harry, Hart, Klingner, & Cramer, 2007). Linton (2004) notes:

All the children in the school, the staff, and parents know which classes are special education classes. No matter what kinds of overt lessons are taught at the school about respect for difference or other such seemingly committed agenda with weak impact, the hidden curriculum, the stronger message, is that children in special education are different, incompetent and unsavory, and because of their isolation, easily avoidable. (p. 159)

Students become “entrapped” in segregated classrooms because there is minimal opportunity for students to return to mainstream classrooms. Anastasios Karagiannis (2000) argues that for students labeled with “soft” disabilities such as Mental Retardation, Emotional Disturbance, and Learning Disabilities, schools become “places of pre incarceration,” setting students up for their subsequent imprisonment.

These isolated and stigmatized classroom placements also have a racial aspect to them, as students of color are disproportionately placed in these settings (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Villa & Thousand, 2005). African American students, for example, are three times more likely to be identified as needing special education services due to intellectual disabilities and 2.3 times more likely to be identified with disabilities of emotional disturbance (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2010, p. 71). Once identified as students in need of special education services,

African American and Hispanic students are more likely than white students to be placed in restrictive placements (Fierros & Conroy, 2002).

So why do so many special schools and special classrooms still exist? To answer this question, one must consider the culture of schools, how schools serve as a microcosm of the larger culture, and how each of us, as individuals, are “carriers” of culture. Even though there is no single monolithic culture in the United States, there are some more dominant cultural narratives than others, and this is particularly true of narratives surrounding disability. The entrenchment of segregated classroom spaces is partly explained by labeling practices that reflect the medical model of disability and belief in a natural intellectual hierarchy backed by science (Gallagher, 2006). As Gallagher (2006) points out, “the concept of natural is important because it is the cornerstone of hierarchy. It offers a powerful narrative to explain the existing social order in such a way that even those at the bottom of the caste system accept its tenets” (p. 64). School systems adhere to the standards of testing and classifying students with educational disability labels in order to receive the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds to support students’ services. Special education referral, testing, and classification often lead to an immediate change in student placement to a more restrictive setting (Erevelles 2006; Kluth, 2003). The underlying assumption of the medical model is that there is a medical or psychological deficit in the student that must be remediated or fixed (Gabel, 2006). The student, referred by the classroom teacher, must go before a committee of “experts” with clinical knowledge in order to identify the child’s educational “needs.”

If culture acts as a lens through which we see and interpret the world, we have to consider our own cultural backgrounds. Segregated classrooms and schools mirror what many of us, parents and teachers, experienced in our own educational backgrounds—*that is what is familiar*

to us. We carry messages around in our minds about what schools should look like, what students should look like, and what our roles as teachers should look like. School reform, one that calls for the end of segregated settings, represents (for many) a radical departure from dominant cultural narratives. Because of this, there are fears, inaccurate assumptions, and resistance experienced by many of those in the throes of reform.

Radical Idealism or the Next Logical Wave of Inclusion?

While some people might view closing segregated classrooms as radical practice and an idealistic dream, for others it represents the next wave of inclusion for students with disabilities. There have been several “inclusive” movements, such as mainstreaming, that have sought to solve some of these problems. In a mainstreaming model, students move in and out of regular education classrooms, interacting with general education students in limited ways (Biklen, 1992). One of the problems with mainstreaming is that it is based on multiple contingencies, such as behavior, academic performance, and availability of accommodations. Each of these pre-requisites has to be satisfied for a student to be “allowed” to enter the general education classroom. Students typically shift back and forth between classrooms and these, “Sporadic, inconsistent, and brief opportunities to join nondisabled children do not result in valued classroom membership” (Kliewer, 1998, p. 58). Kliewer describes the experience for these students as living “the life of a school squatter,” devoid of opportunities to develop full classroom membership and citizenship.

Nondisabled peers are also missing out on important opportunities to learn about diversity and human reciprocity, the idea that every human being has something of worth to contribute to society (Kliewer, 1998, p. 4). As Kliewer (1998) reminds us, “The realization of human reciprocity...cannot occur in isolation. Our humanness (or our construed lack thereof)

emerges in the relationships we form with other members of the human family” (p. 4). Only experiences with diversity will educate and prepare our children to participate in a multicultural democracy (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). Kliewer (1998) explains the importance of community:

Each of our voices, no matter how indecipherable it may sound, strengthens the ever-evolving web of relationships from which a democratic community is formed. The oppressive silencing of even one voice through any form of segregation eliminates that set of experiences from our collective conversation and diminishes the culture of the community. (p. 5)

In effect, the continued use of segregated special education classrooms is a detriment to all of us.

Some educational researchers have questioned whether or not we are asking the right questions. Peterson and Hittie (2003) state, “The most important research questions for the future are not *whether* we should seek to build inclusive schools, but *how* we may do so well” (p. 42). At the heart of inclusive restructuring movements is the notion that all students are educated in general education classrooms together (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008). Success (in terms of academic and social growth) depends on many factors, but perhaps the most important is that, first and foremost, students must feel a sense of belonging. Belonging, as a theme, has become more widely recognized and validated as a basic element to learning. Villa and Thousand (2005), in accordance with theories of motivation, state, “[a] child’s need to belong is critical, if not prerequisite, to a child’s motivation to learn” (p. 43).

Teachers and administrators often worry that students who have been in self-contained classrooms prior to reform might not be “ready” for the pace of instruction and the intensity of a general education curriculum (Gartner & Lipsky, 2004; Kluth, 2003). An underlying assumption,

on the part of these stakeholders, seems to be that all students need to be doing the same work at the same level in order to be a classroom member. This assumption also suggests that certain levels of special education service can only be provided in segregated classrooms. Falvey and Givner (2005) problematize this assumption when they state that inclusive education “does not require students to possess any particular set of skills or abilities as a prerequisite to belonging” (p. 3). In other words, rather than wait and hope that students will acquire the knowledge and skills that make them “ready” to participate in an inclusive classroom, Falvey and Givner suggest that schools start by making all students valued classroom members and by giving all students access to learning. An additional benefit is that when students feel that they belong, disruptive behavioral issues diminish (Peterson & Hittie, 2003, p. 132).

Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) argue that creating a sense of belonging requires more than structural change and access to the classroom. The viability of integrated classrooms is also based on a belief system and several practical principles that are necessary for whole school reform to be implemented: 1) include all; 2) create an inclusive school culture; 3) provide multi-level, authentic instruction using strategies identified as best practice; and 4) develop partnerships and collaborations.

Include all. Falvey and Givner (2005) state, “Inclusive education demands that schools create and provide whatever is necessary to ensure that all students have access to meaningful learning” (p. 3). Placing all students in heterogeneous classrooms eliminates the need for segregated self-contained classrooms and for specialized and stratified educational programs (e.g., gifted, vocational, at-risk, English Language Learners, alternative, and other tracked programs and curricula). Kluth, Straut, and Biklen (2003) define inclusive education as:

[Something] that supports, impacts, and benefits all learners. We see inclusion as an educational orientation that embraces differences and values diversity. Further, we view inclusion as a revolution, a social action, and a critical political movement. [All] students deserve to be educated in ways that make them struggle, think, work, and grow. (p. 3)

Integration and a sense of belonging, as values and philosophies, are based on egalitarian and democratic principles, and are the starting point of inquiry, not “an experiment to be tested” (Stainback, Stainback, & Ayres, 1996).

Presuming competence is a concept that has been associated with inclusion (Biklen & Burke, 2006). When teachers “presume the student’s educability,” the assumption is that the student knows much more than s/he is able to demonstrate. A gap between teaching and student learning does not reside within the individual student but within our abilities as educators to create opportunities for the student to demonstrate what s/he knows. “[The] notion of presuming competence implies that educators must assume students can and will change and, that through engagement with the world, will demonstrate complexities of thought and action that could not necessarily be anticipated” (Biklen & Burke, 2006, p. 168).

Creating an inclusive school culture. The creation of an inclusive school culture is important for whole school inclusive reform. Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) remind us that inclusion is not a place, but is a way of thinking that must permeate all aspects of schooling. This is not an easy task as it requires teachers, administrators, parents, and students to examine our unconscious assumptions and replace the old school culture with the new. Nevertheless, creating a new vision is essential. Thousand and Villa (2005) argue:

Visionizing is really about replacing an old culture with a new one and managing the personal loss that cultural change inevitable stirs. New heroes and heroines, rituals and

symbols, and histories must be constructed. New histories replace the old when traditional solutions (usually tacking on yet another program or professional when children with new differences arrives in school) and other educational inequities (the racial, ethnic, and economic discrimination that arises from tracking, special education, and gifted and talented programs) are loudly and publicly pointed out as ineffective, inefficient, and counter to the desired vision of inclusive learning opportunities. Of particular importance is introducing and expecting the use of new language and labels that are educative. (pp. 60-61)

Changing school culture, and deeply held ideas about what classrooms and schools should look like, is an important element of whole-school inclusive reform. Thousand and Villa (2005) suggest that in order to move forward, we must really listen to stakeholders' fears, questions, and concerns so that we can address them seriously in the reform process.

Provide multi-level, authentic instruction using strategies identified as best practice. Villa and Thousand (2005) argue, “[Heterogeneity] requires classroom organization that can accommodate children with different maturity levels and different intellectual levels” (p. 106). In heterogeneous classrooms, diversity becomes a classroom norm. In such classrooms, Kluth and Chandler-Olcott (2008) argue:

Students won't need to demonstrate certain kinds of literacy competence before being invited to participate in curriculum and instruction in general education classrooms; learners won't be expected to develop, behave, and learn in the same ways; and individual differences in learning will be supported and appreciated. Often teachers get stuck in the mode of doing things the way they have always done them; often, they are

not given the permission or the space to think about doing things more effectively and flexibly. (p. 36)

Curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment will have to be re-thought. Kluth (2003) reminds us, “The myth of the average learner has been shattered and teachers [need] to individualize and honor the unique profiles of all students” (p. 29). Teachers can motivate students to learn by choosing curricula that is personally and culturally relevant to them. Teachers must take the time to get to know what motivates their students and to determine their academic and social needs. This is referred to as responsive instruction—when teachers choose content that matters, use flexible groupings, utilize a wide range of materials and lesson formats (e.g., cooperative learning, literature circles, games, projects, etc.), and the element of choice, to engage all learners and to appreciate their unique ways of engaging educational content.

Develop partnerships and collaborations. Inclusive reform, like school reform in general (Payne 2008), is not easy work. Thousand and Villa (2005) argue that this difficult task requires professionals to “relinquish traditional roles, drop distinct professional labels, and redistribute their job functions across any number of other people” (p. 69). Roles and responsibilities change as teachers and related service providers engage in shared decision-making, cooperative planning, and co-teaching. Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) state that committed leadership by district and school administration is essential to leading schools toward lasting reform. School administrators play critical roles in leading a school staff toward inclusive schooling. Not only do they articulate a vision and a commitment (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008), they also are responsible for creating an innovative school schedule that incorporates common planning time for co-teaching teams (Thousand & Villa, 2008).

The above is a simplified list of principles necessary for the implementation of whole school reform. The actual work is much more complex than this list suggests. These categories are not necessarily linear or discrete; in other words, creating an inclusive school culture is not an item you can check-off a list of “steps-to-take” in whole-school reform. Because culture is dynamic and a human creation, there is a need to *always* keep this principle at the forefront of our minds. Therefore, the work of creating an inclusive school culture will never be complete. Allan (2006) argues that we should resist closure and endings. She states that we should instead see inclusion as “having no fixed point to which we aspire, but as a process that has to be constantly performed and with vigilance for whatever threatens it” (p. 353).

Purpose of the Study

I entered this research study with broad questions and a commitment to openness. I wanted to understand the process of how schools close self-contained classrooms and integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms, but the project was yet to be focused. Initially, I attended project meetings at Kennedy School where university professors met with a group of curious and committed staff members to discuss possible models for reform and to develop a plan for moving forward. After attending several meetings, it became clear to me that I should focus on the perspectives and experiences of both teachers and administrators. Several staff members regularly attended voluntary, monthly, after-school meetings to learn about the project and to help form the direction the reform took. This group spearheaded the movement, so I felt it was essential that their stories be told. Not only was it important to capture the perspectives of teachers and administrators at the beginning of reform efforts, but also how these perspectives and the meanings of their work shifted throughout this process.

Situating Myself

Like all researchers, I come to this study from a particular social location, which undoubtedly influences my research questions, data collection, and interpretations. My 13 year-old nephew, Wyatt, has Down syndrome and he has been placed in the same segregated special education classroom in rural northern California for the past eight years. Despite my repeated attempts to work with his school and with his family, some 2,700 miles away, his classroom placement has not changed. I have learned from this personal experience that it is not enough to expect some parents to be able to advocate for their children. Working class and poor parents often rely on educational experts when it comes to school matters because they often fear doing the wrong thing (Lareau, 2003). The special education system is inequitable when *some* students are included in general education classes simply because their parents are more educated and politically savvy (Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000). That is why I am interested in studying more systemic changes like the ones proposed through the All Means All Project, where a family does not have to fight for the rights of their child to be educated in the least restrictive environment. These newly envisioned school structures, policies, and cultures are organized around the idea that all students belong in general education classes where they have access to rigorous academics.

I grew up in California knowing little about disability. My father's brother, who lives in Louisiana, has an intellectual disability, and my mother's first cousin, who lives in Utah, has an intellectual disability. Though I did not see either of them often, I now recognize that they experienced very different outcomes. Uncle Billy is one of five children and his family was poor. The family of seven lived in a small house in a small southern town where everyone knew each other. My grandmother was embarrassed to have a child with a disability, so she did not take him

outside their home during daylight hours. When the family had visitors, he was taken to the back room of the house. Uncle Billy's educational experience consisted of a residential special school, where he spent the week and then was picked up on Fridays to spend the weekend with family. Once the family discovered that Billy was being abused, they pulled him from the school and he remained at home. Uncle Billy never held a job. For most of his adult life, he sat in his rocking chair, listening to his radio, holding a children's picture book, and watching the front door waiting to see who drove into the yard. Today, at the age of 60, he lives in a nursing home in Louisiana.

Steven, my mother's cousin, is one of six children in a family where both parents were educated and the father made a good income. At a young age, Steven was diagnosed with Cornelia de Lange Syndrome. Steven always attended school, albeit a special school, and he returned home each night to live with his family of eight. Living in urban Salt Lake City provided Steven numerous opportunities to be involved in family and church activities. After high school, he began a supported-employment program through the Columbus Community Center. Today, at the age of 56, he still works there where he earns an income. Steven likes to spend his money on movies and Coca-cola. He used to fly to Arizona each summer to spend time with his sister on a Navajo reservation and he always paid for his own trips. Steven also saved his money to purchase his own video player, a camera, and a television. He still lives at home with his mother.

Today, I can look back and see more clearly some of the factors that played a role in the different outcomes of their lives: different geographic regions with different culture narratives about disability, different levels of parents' education, different socioeconomic statuses, different

school and work expectations for the two men and, perhaps more important, very different levels of inclusion in family, church, and community life.

Even though I had these experiences with Uncle Billy, Steven, and Wyatt, I never considered teaching special education. Because I had my heart set on studying Anthropology, we moved our family to Syracuse so that I could pursue a Ph.D. This, however, changed when I began working as an assistant teacher at the Jowonio School, one of the first inclusive pre-schools in the nation. That experience changed the trajectory of my life and my career. Jowonio has maintained a commitment to inclusive education for more than 40 years. Six out of 17 students in each classroom have an educational disability classification, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and not yet verbal students with autism. Through the use of Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006) and Universal Design for Learning (Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley, & Abarbanell, 2006)), *all* students participate in *all* activities. I recall being intrigued by the mismatch between what I read about disability and what I experienced everyday in the classroom. I advocated for two students each year, writing and updating their Individual Education Plans and advocating for services at their Committee for Special Education meetings. These students, and their learning experiences, continue to be near to my heart.

All the while, I was thinking of Wyatt. I recall the day that my mother called—I was standing in the green 1970s era kitchen of our home in upstate New York. She called to tell me that my five-year-old nephew was struggling in his inclusive kindergarten placement. The rural northern California school district recommended that Wyatt be placed in a special classroom until he was “ready” for a regular education classroom. School officials defined “ready” as being “more mature” and as having “more developed academic skills.” I recall telling my mother, “If Wyatt is removed from that classroom, he will never be ‘ready’ to return.”

Wyatt spent the next eight years in the same classroom at the local middle school. His “classroom” was a makeshift trailer that had been added to the school playground. As a five year old, Wyatt was surrounded by middle school teenagers. He and his fellow classmates only left the classroom to walk to the cafeteria. There, they filled their lunch trays and returned to their classroom to eat in isolation. In his ninth year of schooling, Wyatt was moved to a special classroom at the high school.

I have always felt haunted, and a bit like a fraud, for doing work in inclusive education in New York when I knew about Wyatt’s limited educational opportunities in California. I tried, on various occasions, to intervene but I was always stopped when it came time for Wyatt’s parents, my sister and brother-in-law, to follow through. Wyatt is one of five children and my sister struggles with her own mental health. What this experience has taught me is that there will always be students for whom their parents cannot, for whatever reason (and it is not our place to judge them), advocate for the education their children deserve. The responsibility then falls on teachers and school administrators to be these students’ best advocates.

As I was advocating for children with disabilities at the Jowonio School in New York, where I worked, I was hoping that someone in California was doing the same for Wyatt. No one did.

About that time I learned of the All Means All Project, whole-school inclusive reform, where the responsibility for educating a student like Wyatt does not fall on one teacher’s practice or on one family’s ability to advocate. The All Means All Project is part of several wider academic conversations about school reform, about providing more inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities, and about administrators’ and teachers’ experiences with inclusive school reform.

I also feel passionately critical of the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education and particularly in self-contained classrooms. Patterns of disproportionality for African American males in two disability categories, mental retardation and emotional disturbance, have been documented for the past four decades (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The former segregated rooms at Kennedy school were comprised of predominantly male, African-American students. As the white mother of several biracial children, I experienced white teachers who had low expectations for my own children. This reality surfaced during a parent-teacher meeting when the teacher told us that she was pleased with our daughter's progress (low Bs and Cs). We had to make it clear to the teacher that we hold higher expectations for our daughter and we expected her to do the same. Again, not all parents are able to advocate on behalf of their children. We should not assume that any parent does not want what is best for their children. As educators, I feel that it is our responsibility to make sure we have high expectations for all students.

Research Questions

Teachers and administrators are major stakeholders in school reform, so it is important to learn how they understand the project philosophically and how they experience the reform process practically. This inquiry is guided by the following questions:

- How do teachers and administrators at Kennedy School understand the All Means All Project and how do they make sense of their experiences as they undergo the process of whole school inclusive reform?
- What are the challenges individual teachers and administrators face, whether philosophically or practically, in embracing these changes?

- What do stakeholders view as the benefits associated with whole school inclusive reform?

School reform is arduous work, and my hope is that teachers and administrators in the midst of this experience will shed light on the school structures, policies, and culture that must be questioned, and ultimately re-envisioned, if schools aim to educate all students in schools with increasingly diverse populations.

The All Means All Project at Kennedy School was initiated by two faculty members from a nearby university in the spring of 2007. Kennedy is a K-8 school, located in a mid-sized city in the northeast United States. The school district has more than 20,000 students, and Kennedy School has over 500 students. Fifty-eight percent of the student body at this particular school are African-American, 35 percent are white, 4 percent are Hispanic, and 61 percent of students are eligible for free lunch. After the staff voted overwhelmingly in-favor of the reform, they began monthly planning meetings later that fall. That was when I entered the setting and began to collect qualitative data at these meetings. Data collection continued as I focused my research questions and expanded my research methods to include interviews of stakeholders and classroom observations.

Definition of Terms

Below, I include definitions of terms that readers will see throughout this manuscript. The terms “collaboration” and “co-teaching” were highlighted by the university professors as critical aspects of whole-school inclusive reform. The terms and definitions are important in contextualizing this study:

Collaboration is the “interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (Friend & Cooke,

1992, p. 5). In the context of the All Means All Project, collaboration refers to university professors, district administrators, school administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers making decisions about what restructuring looks like in practice and joint problem-solving when issues arise.

Co-teaching is “two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom. It involves the distribution of responsibility among people for planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students” (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008, p. 5). In the context of this study, co-teaching refers to the new, restructured, teaching arrangements for most teachers and classrooms at Kennedy School.

Inclusion, according to the National Association of State Boards of Education (2008), means that “all children must be educated in supported, heterogeneous, age-appropriate, natural, child-focused, school environment for the purpose of preparing them for full participation in our diverse and integrated society” (Public Policy Positions 2008, Section J. Students with Special Needs, Number 2). Inclusive philosophy is also behind the restructuring practices of the All Means All project; as special classrooms are closed, all students are then educated together in heterogeneous classrooms.

Self-contained classroom is a phrase typically used by teachers and administrators to describe special classes used exclusively for educating students with disabilities. Special classes typically have 15 or fewer students. Though the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* does not specifically mention the terms “self-contained” or “inclusion,” the law does demonstrate a preference for educating students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The legal standards for school districts to show that a special classroom is the least restrictive

placement for a student are high, however, they continue to be used throughout many of the nation's public schools.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 situates this study within the wider academic literature around school reform. I begin this review by casting a wide net of research findings on systemic, school district-level reforms because Kennedy School is part of a district with a vision for creating more inclusive schools. I then narrow the focus to examples of individual school restructuring studies. Within school-level reform, I also look at the literature from two perspectives, that of administrators and that of teachers. Both perspectives are important to understand as principals and teachers enact, and sometimes resist, the changes necessary for restructuring.

Chapter 3 describes this qualitative case study in detail, including information about research participants, my entry into the project, my concerns about my position within the school, and how I collected and analyzed data. I explain what drew me into this research project, philosophically and personally, and what sustained me in the process. In this chapter, I also reveal the assumptions I brought to this work and how my subjectivity may have affected my interpretations so that each reader can best judge my analysis for him/herself.

The representation of data begins in Chapter 4 with the ways that teachers and administrators socially constructed students who were placed in self-contained classrooms. In this chapter, I introduce a student named DeMarcus. I describe how DeMarcus's identity was constructed, through stakeholders' "talk," as a student who was too disabled to be included in general education settings. I analyze how that identity, as a "self contained kid," followed him into the general education classroom after restructuring.

Chapter 5 highlights the importance for stakeholders, engaged in school reform, to hold a clearly articulated, shared vision for a more desirable future. Dominant cultural narratives about students (e.g., who “belongs” in which spaces) are carried in people’s minds and entrenched in school systems. This chapter reveals how skepticism impeded progress in the beginning and then how two events, in particular, were key turning points for stakeholders. This chapter demonstrates the potential for stakeholders to return to more familiar schooling practices when confronted with restructuring challenges and a vision-to-reality mismatch.

Finally, in Chapter 6, stakeholders “arrived” at a place where they recognized that their efforts were worth the challenges they experienced. Teachers and administrators described both their own learning and growth as well as the learning and growth of their students. At the time my data collection ended, the mantra I heard from several stakeholders regarding restructuring was, *“It’s what’s best for kids.”*

In the conclusion, I draw together examples of best practices for inclusive whole school reform demonstrated by Kennedy School staff members. I propose that the infusion of a Disability Studies in Education perspective and a Culturally Relevant Teaching perspective into efforts to restructure for more inclusive educational opportunities might alleviate some of the struggles that Kennedy School staff experienced. Finally, I suggest ways that this study might contribute to a new frontier for inclusive education.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

School reform studies run the gamut from government-developed restructuring programs such as President Bush's New American Schools (NAS) Development Corporation in 1991 and the Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSRP) passed by Congress in 1998, to externally-developed restructuring programs such as Comer School Development Program (Comer, 1988) and Success for All (Slavin & Madden, 2001), to district and school collaborative projects with local universities, and to individual schools creating their own reform models. Inclusive school reform studies are not quite as numerous or widespread but they, too, show some variability in foci; some focus at the district level, some focus at the school level, while others focus on the experiences of administrators and teachers engaged in the process.

Inclusive School District Reform

Ryndak, Reardon, Benner, and Ward (2007) conducted a 7-year case study of one southeastern school district as they transitioned to make their district more inclusive. For two years prior to implementation, the district held professional development workshops for school teams and administrators, funded by the Inclusive Education Technical Assistance Network (IE-TAN), a state-funded project for the purpose of increasing inclusive services to students with disabilities. Even after two years of professional development, there still were no widespread changes in services for students.

During the first year of implementation, three schools were selected (one elementary, one middle, and one high school) that were already serving students with severe disabilities, though researchers found that the schools had yet to truly embrace an inclusive philosophy; at that time, students were included in general education classrooms on a student-by-student basis.

Researchers found the limited effect of implementation to be the result of two factors: first, school and district administrators' attendance at monthly planning meetings was sporadic and inconsistent; and second, there was no single individual at the district level responsible for facilitating meetings. The district responded by adding a full-time district inclusion facilitator for year two.

Year two of implementation brought some changes to the number of schools involved as one of the original schools chosen decided to discontinue its participation but three additional schools were added, bringing the total to five schools. Each school team developed an action plan to change students' placements and teachers' practices. Only during the third year of implementation, after an additional six schools had been added, the district turned toward more systemic change. Professional development workshops were developed for district-wide implementation that included co-teaching models and instructional strategies for including students with disabilities. It is worth noting that up until that time, the district formally had two separate professional development systems in place, one for general education staff and one for special education staff. Those two systems were joined in the fourth year of implementation as the district transitioned to collaborative professional development. Also during that year, four additional schools were added to bring the total to 15 schools involved in restructuring.

During year five, the district implemented a PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) Plan that it created in year four, which focused on increasing the number of students with severe disabilities educated in general education classrooms and on collaborative professional development activities including differentiated instruction, accommodations, modifications, and alternative assessment. The following two years, the district reduced their reliance on the university faculty and other "external critical friends," the IE-TAN representative

changed and the district superintendent changed. Despite these changes, Ryndak et. al (2007) conclude that the schools continued to increase students' access to general education: "These data indicate that the district was successful at both increasing the provision of inclusive education services for students with disabilities and improving student outcomes across the district" (p. 243). Through systemic change efforts, the district was able to sustain these changes. It is worth noting here that a substantial number of resources were added to this restructuring effort, including state funds, regional representatives, and district personnel.

Despite the paucity of research on inclusive school district systemic reforms, there are some studies that investigate the importance of school district restructuring on student achievement even though they are not exclusively focused on the education of students with disabilities. In Brenda Gifford's (2009) dissertation—a qualitative case study of the role that a school district played in the work to increase student achievement, she describes the systemic project as representing remarkable coherence throughout the school district, where all the parts, "the structures, constructs, action plans, district initiatives, expectations, and instructional practices" (p. 83), focused on teaching and holding high expectations for all students. The adults in her case study describe their work as emanating from a moral position and from a civil rights perspective. Gifford suggests, "In this particular school district, the 'all means all' axiom is 'alive and well' (p. 84).

The school district's needs, aimed at increasing student achievement, were detailed in the District Improvement Plan. District leaders described that a very important part of the plan is having school leaders who "owned" implementation efforts because of their close connection to what happens in classrooms. Individual schools also had leeway and choice in certain aspects of implementation, such as their use of time. For example, some schools chose to have a late start

for students on Wednesdays so teachers could have two hours together each week to grow in their professional development.

An important part of the district's plan included the establishment of School Support Teams (SST). The SST included someone from the superintendent's council, teachers, a parent, the principal of the school, and another principal. This diversity of perspectives allowed for increased breadth and depth of sharing information, learning, resources, and problem-solving. In this way, there was a constant re-visiting and re-articulating the superintendent's mission, lateral reciprocity between building principals, built-in opportunities for reflection, and the specific needs of each school articulated clearly to people in higher decision-making positions. Gifford (2009) cites being "impressed" with the top/down and bottom/up systemic nature of the SST.

In the above study, district vision and support in reform was critical so that principals could take up their leadership positions to guide their buildings in actualizing the goals of reform. Individual school administrators and teachers need to ask, "What needs to be done to maximize student achievement in my setting?" (Gifford 2009, p. 130). This type of question, and waiting for a response, takes courage. When building-level principals feel supported systemically and continuously by district administrators, the momentum is easier to sustain. Gifford states, "To fully maximize this leveraging, an environment of trust and collegiality is needed to have crucial two-way conversations about what is needed" (p. 129).

Everyone involved, including parents, should know the district's focus and direction and be able to articulate it because this will help create coherence. Gifford (2009) argues:

More concerted efforts are needed to bring parents and community members into our schools and partner with us. Too often meetings are called and committees are established but the same few parents participate. How can we all re-think these processes

so that more parents, especially our marginalized parents, are engaged in these efforts with us? (p. 136)

Gifford concludes her dissertation, not citing increased student achievement, but rather calling for more coherence across school districts and further research investigating the influence of school district reform on student achievement. She argues that schools will be strengthened, and desired student outcomes will be achieved, when school leaders and teachers work together rather than in isolation.

Similarly, Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) argue that district-wide reform begins with the district leadership and constructing a compelling vision of reform. The district leadership's vision needs to be put into practice by school leaders who are willing to take up the charge, thus requiring "daily, internally driven leadership" (Fullan et al. 2004, p. 43). Restructuring of this magnitude will require, in large part, school cultures built upon trust, respect, and integrity. Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) explain, "High-trust cultures make the extraordinary possible, energizing people and giving them the wherewithal to succeed under enormously demanding conditions—and the confidence that staying the course will pay off" (p. 45).

Each of the six school districts with which these researchers worked made use of external partners, including businesses, community-based organizations and university personnel. Fullan et al. (2004) argue, "well-placed pressure from external partners, combined with internal energy, can be the stimulus for tackling something that might not otherwise be addressed, and district leaders can use these partners to stir the pot in purposeful directions" (p. 45). One such "purposeful direction" may be systemic reforms that result in increased student achievement outcomes. Fullan et al. (2004) report promising findings based on their research with school districts implementing systemic reforms: 1) achievement in literacy increased by 9 percentage

points in four years for a school district in Toronto; 2) in Edmonton, researchers found an increase of 11.5 percent on provincewide assessments in four years; and 3) a large scale study in England, involving 19,000 primary schools, demonstrated a 12 percent increase in the number of students achieving a proficient level in literacy and mathematics.

Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) conclude their article on district-wide reform by stressing three factors:

- 1) Districts must develop *school capacity* to enable schools to act more autonomously.
- 2) Districts must foster cross-school learning (lateral capacity) that has powerful benefits for individual schools and for the system as a whole.
- 3) Because local autonomy does not guarantee that persistently underperforming schools will improve, districts have a moral obligation to intervene in these schools on behalf of students, families, and the school community. (p. 5)

A more typical case scenario of district reform is that inclusive education “remains largely a separate initiative, parallel to, rather than integrated within broad school reforms” (Lipsky & Gartner 1998, p. 81).

Individual School Reform

Due to the complexity of systemic reform, it is more common to find reform agendas specific to individual school buildings. Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) is considered a third wave of educational reform that tries to reconcile the focus of the first wave (on top-down policy changes like increased standards and regulations) and the focus of the second wave (on local control over reforms like school-based management decision-making) (McLeskey & Waldron, 2006). Borman (2009) argues that there are 29 CSR models and none of them make educating students with disabilities a focus (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Many of these reform

models have been developed externally, and have been adopted by schools as “blueprints for change,” with the intent of instituting instructional and organizational change at the local school level. In other words, they prescribe, “new curricular materials, new methods of instruction, alternative staffing configurations, and a series of ongoing professional development activities” (Borman, 2009, p. 13). Borman (2009) found that many of the 29 models showed an “implementation dip” during the first year of implementation, suggesting that things may “get somewhat worse before they get better” (p. 27). Following the first year, however, Borman (2009) found consistency across the 29 models, “...showing an increasing effect on achievement outcomes associated with a greater number of years of implementation” (p. 27).

Desimone (2002) states, “In contrast to past efforts, comprehensive school wide reform focuses on improvement for entire schools rather than on particular populations of students within schools; and it is not limited to particular subjects, programs, or instructional methods” (p.434). Some researchers, however, are looking for ways to incorporate CSR models with a focus on educating students with disabilities in more inclusive settings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2006). For more than two decades now, McLeskey and Waldron (2006) have worked with school district teams to develop Inclusive School Programs (ISPs) based on the following principles:

- (1) Change must have the support of central office administrators, the building principal, and teachers; (2) schools must be empowered to manage their own change; (3) school change efforts that address inclusion must address improving the school for all students, and not just for students with disabilities; (4) change must be tailored to the particular needs of students and the expertise of educators within each school; (5) change must be built on proven effective practices; and (6) change should focus on making differences ordinary throughout all school settings for all students. (p. 272)

McLeskey and Waldron (2006) have focused on principles that guide the work of creating inclusive school cultures aimed at sustaining systemic reform:

Successful school change must alter not only organizational structures and policies related to individual schools, but also must alter the role and responsibilities of teachers, curriculum used in the classroom, methods for grouping students for instruction, attitudes and beliefs of teachers, and so on. Such changes require teachers to reflect deeply on the changes that are made, and to incorporate these changes into their beliefs about schooling. (p. 270)

Despite the many legislative initiatives and federal regulations (i.e., *IDEA*, *NCLB*), progress toward educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms has been slow because (a) too many inclusive programs have been adopted as add-on programs without substantive input by general education teachers, and (b) professional development needs have not been situated within the larger school context so few teachers and administrators take ownership of these changes (McLeskey & Waldron, 2006, p. 270).

McLeskey and Waldron (2006) advise a ten-step plan toward developing an ISP, which includes beginning with a discussion of schooling for all students. Schools should then form working teams to examine their school and other schools, develop a plan, review and discuss the plan with the school community, incorporate changes into the plan, incorporate focused professional development, implement the plan, and finally monitor, evaluate, and change the plan as needed (pp. 273-275).

After working with 40 elementary, middle, and high schools, McLeskey and Waldron (2006) report that one third of the schools made substantive changes, one third made modest changes, and one third made few changes. Despite these variable re-structuring outcomes, they

found that “student outcomes are at least as good, and often better when students are in inclusive programs, when compared to separate class special education programs” (p. 275). Additionally, teachers reported an improvement in students’ social behaviors as a result of having positive behavior models and a general desire to “fit in.”

Frattura and Capper (2006) describe a model of reform called Integrated Comprehensive Services (ICS). One of the core principles of ICS is the focus on building teacher capacity to teach to diverse student experiences and needs. Frattura and Capper (2006) encourage participants in IEP meetings to consider the question, “If no such program existed, how would we best meet this student’s needs?” (p. 358). So, rather than send a student to a segregated program, and diminish the teacher’s capacity to learn how to support him, stakeholders should make the assumption that there is no other place to send him. Other important practices under ICS are: 1) all students are placed in heterogeneous classrooms with flexible groupings; 2) students are placed in classrooms in natural proportions to the school to avoid the over-reliance on “inclusion classrooms”; and 3) school systems need to adapt to the student. Frattura and Capper (2006) warn that as long as separate educational settings exist, teachers will find reasons to place students there (p. 360).

Many schools are held accountable for making educational changes that result in increased student achievement. However, Smith and Wohlstetter (2006) argue that individual schools often lack the capacity and the tools to improve the quality of instruction and to change more structural, administrative tasks. One proposal to address these gaps is for increased knowledge- and experience-sharing *between* schools. According to Smith and Wohlstetter (2006), “a school network can develop a coherent plan for student learning and social services supported with relevant administrative coordination, professional development, and shared

control of resources” (p. 500). Networks of parents, teachers, and external partners have the potential to re-distribute information and resources that ultimately serve to construct new structures, policies, and practices essential to school reform. The authors advocate for the use of cross-site teams who meet regularly to discuss shared values and improvement strategies. In such a network, the principal becomes only one source of information-sharing and meaning-making.

Role of School Leaders

McLeskey and Waldron (2000) consider the school principal as the most influential person in creating an inclusive school, so much so that they refuse to work with schools considering reform unless the principal is actively involved in the process. School leaders not only articulate a vision and a commitment (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008), but they also are responsible for creating an innovative school schedule that incorporates common planning time for co-teaching teams (Villa & Thousand, 2005). McLeskey and Waldron (2000) describe strong leadership as contagious: “Others soon want to become involved in the changes in their school and are more likely to take risks if strong leadership for the change is obvious” (p. 31).

So what does school leadership look like in the practice of reform? Salisbury (2006) conducted a study of eight principals who were engaged in developing inclusive elementary schools from districts across Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Although each of the districts had been engaged in restructuring for more than eight years prior to the study, Salisbury found that none of the principals’ schools were fully inclusive. She defines fully inclusive to be:

Schools where students with disabilities, including those with significant support needs, are full time members of the class they would attend if they did not have a disability and have the necessary and individualized supports according to the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). (p. 81)

Even though the principals talked about their schools as “functioning inclusively,” all of them used pull-out resource rooms to varying degrees and most of the schools maintained self-contained classrooms (Salisbury, 2006).

In schools that she described as “partially inclusive,” meaning that students with disabilities received at least some of their education in a general education classroom alongside their peers without disabilities, Salisbury (2006) found that the principals espoused an inclusive philosophy that valued “diversity, acceptance, and membership” and that students with disabilities were described as simply “part of the fabric of the school” (p. 76). In these schools, the use of self-contained rooms were either limited in use or eliminated altogether.

Schools that exhibited an “integrated level of implementation” assigned students with disabilities to self-contained classrooms but some students attended general education classrooms for certain times of the day. Principals of “integrated practices” talked of inclusive education as “rooted in policy compliance rather than in a commitment to the principles of social justice, equity, and diversity” (Salisbury, 2006, p. 77). In reference to educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms, the latter group of principals believed that “some kids need a different place.”

Salisbury concludes that heterogeneity in implementation occurred across the schools irrespective of demographic variables and that the level of inclusive implementation seemed to be highly correlated to the particular principals involved. Schools with the strongest administrative support and commitment were the “partially inclusive” schools. She explains, “The proponents of inclusive education in our sample were distinguished by their ‘do what it takes’ attitude, inclusive language, collaborative approach to decision-making, and philosophical commitment to inclusive education” (Salisbury, 2006, p. 79). Clearly, a principal’s role is an

important one in leading a school staff toward more inclusive educational opportunities for students.

DuFour (2007) argues that one of the most important responsibilities for school leaders is to provide clarity:

Clarity regarding the fundamental purpose of the organization, the future it must create to better fulfill that purpose, the most high-leverage strategies for creating that future, the indicators of progress it will monitor and the specific ways each member of the organization can contribute both to its long-term purpose and short-term goals.

(paragraph 28)

Providing clarity also means that school principals have the difficult job of leading staff, students, and parents through shifting understandings and meanings.

To highlight the complexity of institutional change, Cooper (1996) reports on a quantitative and qualitative case study in which one California high school attempted to restructure, in the form of a pilot study, to de-track 9th grade English and History courses. Two groups emerged resisting these efforts: veteran teachers and the parents of the students in the formerly-high tracked classes. In hindsight, the principal realized that he had failed to work at creating a shared vision of reform with veteran teachers. One of the explanations as to why this initiative was so difficult was because the educators at this school focused more on the structural aspects of reform, such as scheduling and curriculum, and less on the beliefs and values that were at work in this setting.

Cooper's (1996) analysis concludes with the importance of considering the institutional culture of a school when considering any type of reform. Cooper (1996) argues, "The data obtained from this investigation further suggest that institutional culture—that is, the norms and

ethos that drive policy and practice within an institution such as the school—may just as easily serve as a barrier to change as a facilitator in it” (p. 205). Principals have the dubious task of leading both aspects of reform: the structural aspects and the meanings stakeholders attach to these reforms.

The day-to-day management of meanings among stakeholders, and the resolution of their own ideological contradictions, are important tasks for school leaders (Riehl, 2000). Riehl (2000) argues that leaders can promote democratic discourse among stakeholders in order to foster new understandings about diversity and inclusive practices. In such a dialogical exchange, stakeholders move beyond being mere recipients of new messages, and instead become co-creators of new meanings. Honest, open, and free exchange of ideas is important in building the trust necessary to address larger school problems. Top-down change, initiated by school administrators, is not enough. It must also be supported by bottom-up change, by the teachers who are called to implement new practices.

Role of Teachers

At the heart of inclusive school reform lies the daily work of teachers—whatever comes down the pike, state mandates, district initiatives, or school-wide professional development, teachers are responsible for enacting changes in their classrooms (Biklen, 1985). Inclusive school reform requires much more than transferring students and teachers from special education into general education classrooms. Restructuring of this magnitude requires an even more arduous task...reinventing what we mean by “general education.”

Why is it so difficult to reinvent when it comes to education? The first and second waves of school reform did little to substantially change the organization of schools or the ways that teachers teach (Payne, 2008; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Desimone (2002) suggests that when

reforms are limited to “one teacher-at-a-time,” “one school-at-a-time,” or “one system-at-a-time,” they are met with limited success (p. 466). Instead, she suggests, all three attributes should be priorities simultaneously. McLeskey and Waldron (2000) argue that restructuring schools for inclusion will require changes in four areas: curriculum and instruction, teacher roles and responsibilities, classroom and school organization, and teacher beliefs about schooling.

We often hear talk of “teachers” as if they are a monolithic group. Even though 85 percent of teachers are female and 86 percent are white (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2010), they differ in other, less visible, ways. For example, some teachers need more autonomy than others to creatively flourish in the classroom, some teachers need a balance of independence and dependence, and other teachers need more specific guidelines about what to teach and how to teach it (Desimone, 2002). These differences play important roles in how teachers take-up different reform movements. On the one hand, an externally-developed comprehensive school reform “package,” like Success for All, might be more difficult for teachers, who need more autonomy, to implement. On the other hand, an internally-developed reform model, that does not have specific guidelines, may be more difficult for other teachers, who need more structured guidelines, to implement. Nunnery (1998) argues that locally-developed reform models involve greater risk because they require more time and planning. With “time” being an always-precious commodity for teachers, asking teachers to devote more time and energy to developing a reform often results in increased frustration and anxiety.

A distinction can also be drawn between teachers who vote to adopt a reform and teachers who actually “buy into” all that the reform entails. Datnow and Castellano (2000) conducted a case study of two elementary schools in California that had been engaged in school reform for two years. One of the schools, Peterson Elementary, was experiencing

implementation success. Peterson Elementary staff voted to adopt Success for All because they did not feel that they had many other options from which to choose. The principal told the school staff that they needed to adopt a program in order to spend Title VII grant money.

The other school staff, at Gardenia Elementary, voted to implement Success for All (SFA) after the principal expressed that this should be the program adopted. This top-down approach led to increased teacher turnover; only seven of the twenty teachers who were part of the initial vote were still teaching at Gardenia three years into the implementation. The principals at both schools encouraged staff members to vote to adopt the program.

Following two days of site visits at both schools and 47 interviews later, Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that teachers fell into one of four categories: teachers who strongly supported the program, teachers who generally supported the program, teachers who simply accepted the program, and finally, teachers who opposed the program. Teachers who strongly supported the program found the reading program to fit well with their beliefs about how to teach reading. Teachers who generally supported the program found that the program had some positive attributes but that it was too constraining on their autonomy. Teachers who simply accepted the program seemed to simply be “going through the motions”; they saw more negative attributes of the program for themselves but they saw that some teachers at the school needed the more structured program. These teachers were characterized as not vehemently outspoken about the program but described as exhibiting a quiet lack of support. The teachers who outwardly opposed the program had numerous critiques, arguing that a one-size-fits-all approach to reform is not beneficial and that the program was too prescriptive. Nevertheless, teachers’ articulated levels of support did not directly correlate with actual implementation. Teachers continued to implement Success for All, though some did so begrudgingly, because they felt that it was best

for students. Two years after SFA began, scores for students reading at grade level increased from 21 percent to 49 percent (Datnow & Castellano 2000, p. 785).

One theme that emerged from the study above was that externally-developed reforms need to take into consideration the school's local needs and constraints. Several teachers adapted the program to fit their local needs, but Success for All program facilitators did not encourage adaptations because they slowed the pace of the implementation.

The above example suggests that there is a difference between teachers who vote to adopt a program and the expectation that they will actually "buy-into" all that the reform entails. Datnow and Castellano (2000) conclude that any externally-developed program will be more fully embraced if the changes are co-constructed with school staff. Even then, there will likely be teachers who resist reform efforts and those issues need to be addressed directly so that the reform effort is not drawn off-track by a few people who are dissatisfied.

In an article entitled, "Change is Hard," Davis (2002) reports on a study of teachers as learners of new practices during a period of science curriculum reform in a military base middle school. Exploring the structures, policies, and practices interconnected with reform, she found that teacher learning is facilitated when professional development opportunities contain constructivist underpinnings. In other words, when teachers are provided the time and space to share ideas about their use of a new curriculum, discuss how learning takes place, consider and share their own teaching philosophy, and draw upon their own previous knowledge, teachers become more active participants in the reform process. Parallels can be drawn between what students are being asked to do and what teachers are being asked to do:

Be challenged to become skillful thinkers and problem-solvers; work together within groups and teams; be creative; persevere in long-term investigations; communicate

effectively; apply what they learn to authentic needs within their own communities; and be flexible and adaptable to changes and discoveries. (Davis, 2002, p. 22)

In an era of high stakes testing and accountability, however, teachers may in fact place less emphasis on constructivist teaching and learning. Davis's study is important because it highlights how, whether you are a teacher or a student, constructivist teaching is how we all learn.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about their students, about learning, and about teaching play pivotal roles in practices that either support or impede reform efforts. The university faculty responsible for professional development in Davis' study believed that teachers needed to experience dissonance with their old beliefs about teaching and about their students as learners before they could see the value in adopting new beliefs, pedagogy, and curriculum. They also believed that just as students learn at different paces, so too should we expect teachers to learn at different paces; teachers bring to the table varying degrees of knowledge, experience, and belief systems, some of which align better with reform efforts than others.

Davis (2002) describes one teacher in particular, Andrew, who struggled with implementing the reform because his deeply-held beliefs about students as learners did not coincide with reform efforts. Andrew was implementing a new curriculum that conflicted with his teaching philosophy and belief system. Instead of feeling the dissonance expected and needed for teachers to see the value in the new approach, Andrew grew resistant. What Andrew needed, according to Davis (2002), was an in-service that taught him about cooperative learning, but unfortunately it was too late; time had exceeded the professional development commitment of three years. Staff development had ended, the outside experts (i.e., university faculty members and graduate students) had moved on, and no structures within the school had been established to continue to support Andrew in his own learning.

Because a substantive amount of time must be allotted for teacher learning to occur, via changes in beliefs, attitudes and practices, it is important for schools to build learning communities that will continue the dialogue, self-reflection, and growth even after formal professional development has ended. Teacher learning can be continually supported when school communities are formed which "...expose, interrupt, and remove long-held beliefs, policies, and structures that regularly deprive teachers, students, and parents of autonomy and decision-making power" (Davis, 2002, p. 25). In these communities, teachers will become empowered as they are encouraged to take risks in learning and sharing together.

Davis (2002) concludes with suggestions to support teacher learning for effective reform by: (a) creating goals that are constructed by teams of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and outside experts; (b) fostering goals that are based in social justice, caring, and a commitment to all learners; (c) paying attention to the daily questions, knowledge, beliefs, skills, approaches, and talk of both teachers and students; (d) creating professional development that encourages teachers' learning by beginning with their current knowledge, beliefs, and skills with a focus on bridging to new understandings; and (e) by examining and transforming the power structures and discourse practices that will make space for the social construction of new knowledge (p. 27).

Once teachers are encouraged to challenge their deeply-held beliefs, metaphorical "space" opens up for them to consider building new belief systems. Professional development opportunities and knowledge-sharing through cross-site network systems will facilitate the co-construction of new knowledge.

Forms of Resistance

Resistance to inclusive school reform comes from different perspectives. Some educational researchers disagree that all students can be effectively included in general education

classrooms. Kauffman, Lloyd, Baker, and Riedel (1995) argue that some students are so “severely antisocial, aggressive, and disruptive” (p. 542) that regular educational classrooms are not equipped to provide the emotional and academic supports necessary for these students. They argue for special schools and classes that have low pupil/staff ratio and trained personnel to respond to students with “emotional and behavioral disorders”—two conditions, they argue, that are unlikely to be met in regular schools and regular classrooms today (p. 546).

Likewise, Lieberman (1996) argues for the preservation of special education programs outside the purview of regular classrooms because some students “need highly specialized skills taught by specially trained teachers” and as a result, students with disabilities may not respond to instruction provided in a regular education classroom. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) argued more than a decade ago that “full inclusionists” are more concerned with the social integration of students with disabilities and less concerned with academic performance. They predicted:

A vision of regular education that emphasizes a radical constructivist approach to teaching and learning and that deemphasizes curriculum, academic standards, and student and teacher accountability, general education will lose interest in special education as a partner in reform making. (p. 304)

In 1997, the *Review of Educational Research* published an analysis of the politics of special education written by Ellen Brantlinger. In this piece, Brantlinger provides a critical review of publications by prominent scholars in the field of special education. The *traditionalists*, as she refers to them (some of whom are cited above), are those scholars who support traditional special education services, like special classrooms and pull-out services. These scholars became prominent in the field because they created scientific knowledge and discourse, based on a positivist framework, about special education for students with disabilities.

When the *inclusionists* threatened the traditional status quo, arguing that students with moderate and severe disabilities can also be educated in inclusive classrooms, and when that argument gained momentum, that's when the *traditionalists* began a more sustained attack on the *inclusionists*. *Traditionalists* argue that *inclusionists* are too ideological, too political, and that their discourse is merely rhetoric. Brantlinger (1997) lays out the beliefs that undergird inclusive education and calls into question the traditionalists' work as objective, logical, neutral, and pragmatic (p. 443). As she explains, ideology is at work in everything we do.

Today, there is much more emphasis on academic access to general education curriculum and instruction (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*). A high quality educational program for students with moderate to severe disabilities should include exposure to the core curriculum with high expectations for all students, individualized curricular and instructional supports like modifications and assistive technology, skilled and knowledgeable staff, collaboration and team teaching with an emphasis on effective communication, and a positive and caring community (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007). Cosier (2010) found that the amount of time students with disabilities spend in general education classrooms, the higher their academic achievement in reading and math.

Other forms of resistance are more institutionalized and systemic in nature. In *So Much Reform So Little Change* (2008), Payne proposes that reform after reform has failed simply because adults—school leaders, teachers, and reformers have not developed effective ways of collaborating with one another. Relationships between adults in school buildings need to be taken seriously because, as Payne advises, “good ideas will not save us” (p. 34). Many reform programs contain good ideas but unless schools work to establish working networks, they will only be met with limited success. Too many reform programs have come and gone because they

prioritized the structural components of time, physical proximity, and schedules over discussions about school culture, climate, and interpersonal relationships (Payne, 2008, 62). Payne similarly criticizes reform programs aimed at filling teachers' heads with new knowledge in order to experience significant change. Any attempt to impart knowledge to teachers should be coupled with the encouragement and the skill set for teachers to look within and to reflect upon their deeply-held beliefs about students and about their roles as teachers. We should take care not to blame teachers for lack of caring about students and about their roles as educators. Instead, Payne (2008) argues, "We have to keep reminding ourselves that we are talking about systemic problems which cannot be reduced to individual-level explanations" (p. 91).

Demoralization in schools will serve as one example; it runs much deeper than personality differences or teaching style differences because schools are institutions with deeper structural roots. Some of these include: "lack of time for shared reflection and pooling of information" (p. 31), "norms of isolation and competitiveness" (p. 32); lack of respect and trust for other teachers (p. 35); repetitive instruction (p. 90); loss of valuable instructional time or classrooms devoid of intellectual challenge (p. 90); avoidance of discussions of race and racial identification (p. 27); commitment by only a small group of teachers (p. 29); and fear of confrontation (which leads to the "absence of professional dialogue") (p. 33).

Payne (2008) also describes "gung-ho" new teachers who come into schools with fresh ideas and teaching strategies that make student learning more efficient, only to learn that they are often treated by more veteran teachers as deviant. Rather than openness to learning new strategies, veteran teachers view the "rate-busters" as threatening established social arrangements (p. 22). Teacher resistance also appears in the form of non-cooperative teachers and/or teachers who have low expectations for their students. One typical form of teacher resistance is, "...such-

and-such a program may have worked somewhere else, but not here, not with these kids. I know these kids” (Payne, 2008, p. 79).

Inclusive school reform is complex, multidimensional, and often unpredictable. Resistance is a natural reaction to this process of school change, for it is “always fraught with anxiety, frustration, and tension” (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002, p. 71). Teachers’ attitudes and belief systems are being challenged, so we should be wary if there is no sign of resistance for that might indicate that the change is on a superficial level rather than a fundamental substantive level. This work requires conviction, dedication, and continuous hard work. The work of creating an inclusive school culture is never complete.

To ease fears about this complex undertaking, McLeskey and Waldron (2002) suggest reassuring teachers that they will be the primary decision makers in this process. Garnering teachers’ support must include candid discussions about who will be included and whether or not students will benefit from inclusive opportunities (p. 66). In taking the question of “whom” off the table, teachers move more quickly to “how” reform should develop. Not only does inclusive school reform refer to including all students but also to including all teachers in this process. As McLeskey and Waldron (2002) state, “Inclusion is not, and cannot be, just a ‘special education’ issue but requires changes in the professional practices of all teachers in a school” (p. 66).

Not all schools that undergo reform are able to sustain their efforts (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). Following four years of collaborative work with a middle school in Florida, the implementation of systemic reform to include students with disabilities was deemed a success; students with disabilities were learning alongside their classmates. Researchers removed themselves so that they could document sustainability efforts. Upon their return to the school two years later, Sindelar et. al. (2006) found that the school had gone from

an inclusion program to a special education program with pull-out services and segregated classrooms for students with disabilities. Though the researchers did not collect student achievement data when they returned, they observed in classrooms and conducted focus groups with teachers and students. Their analysis suggests that changes in leadership, teacher turnover, and changes in district and state policies were the reasons for the change.

Reform movements are always fraught with the potential for backslide into more comfortable and predictable structures that are compatible with dominant cultural expectations (Fine, M., Anand, B., Hancock, M., Jordan, C., & Sherman, D., 1998). In terms of inclusive education, this means that there is always a gravitational pull toward segregation and exclusion. Leadership can either support or impede sustainability efforts depending on the principal's commitment to inclusive reform. When schools are overwhelmed with policy expectations, like achieving high state test scores, the commitment to inclusive education as a priority may be compromised.

In summary, there have been several large-scale national education reform movements but none of them have focused on educating students with disabilities. At present, the literature includes a few small-scale movements that focused on increasing access to general education classrooms for students with disabilities. This study will contribute to the literature on inclusive education reform at the school level. This project will also highlight the importance of ownership when a plan is developed from within the school, as opposed to one that is developed nationally and marketed as a "blueprint" for change. It is important that stakeholders have some autonomy in deciding what their particular reform looks like in order to take ownership of the changes.

The literature is consistent about the importance of leadership in any reform movement. This study adds to the existing literature by highlighting how district and school leaders must

guide participants in the process of articulating a vision and must maintain a commitment to make the changes necessary to realize that vision. As this study will suggest, school leaders have to think flexibly about roles and responsibilities, scheduling, creating common planning time, and so forth. But leadership must go beyond these logistic plans; reform of this magnitude must also include reflecting upon the deeply held beliefs and values that stakeholders hold of students. Leaders should create the space and encouragement to empower teachers to take these kinds of risks.

In the next chapter, I turn to data collection and analysis. After outlining my research questions, I explain how I became involved in this project and the methods and procedures I used to gather and interpret data.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate teachers' and administrators' understandings and experiences as they restructured their school to make more inclusive education opportunities for all students. This inquiry is guided by the following questions:

- How do teachers and administrators at Kennedy School understand the All Means All Project and how do they make sense of their experiences as they undergo the process of whole school inclusive reform?
- What are the challenges individual teachers and administrators face, whether philosophically or practically, in embracing these changes?
- What do stakeholders view as the benefits associated with whole school inclusive reform?

This chapter describes the methodology used to guide this research project. It explains my entry into the field, information about the context of the study, and a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures I employed.

Qualitative Research Methods

My approach in seeking answers to the questions above is through qualitative methodology emanating from a phenomenological theoretical perspective. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) define qualitative methodology as "Research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (p. 7). Qualitative researchers seek to understand how meanings are negotiated and how definitions are formed in the naturalistic setting in which they occur (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Researchers in the qualitative tradition seek to understand the conceptual world of their participants by trying to understand the “meaning they construct around events in their daily lives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 23). In using methods such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation, researchers more easily empathize and identify with the people they study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Seeking to understand participant’s experiences from their own perspectives is key to qualitative methodology.

Qualitative researchers enter research sites with research interests but without specific questions or hypotheses to test. Giving up specificity at the beginning of research projects, the researcher gains complexity in the process as qualitative research methods produce rich and descriptive data that can be “messy.” The data include detailed accounts of people engaged in activities and absorbed in conversations (and sometimes contradictions), living or working in naturally-occurring contexts. Herein lies the beauty of qualitative methods, for in that “messiness” the researcher seeks to understand the research participants’ unique perspectives and behaviors, mostly through their own lenses.

One distinctive feature of qualitative research methods is that the process of collecting data unfolds in naturalistic settings. Unlike a quantitative research design that may utilize surveys, which can be sent anywhere, qualitative methods call for data collection in specific and naturally-occurring contexts. So the best place to study how teachers and administrators understand and experience inclusive school reform is, of course, in schools. For this study, that meant spending many hours over the course of two years *in* Kennedy School. The importance of spending time in the context cannot be underestimated, as Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state, “qualitative researchers assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, and whenever possible, they go to that location” (p. 5). Though the presence of a

researcher influences what participants say and do, the novelty of having a researcher present diminishes over time and stakeholders resume their more natural activities.

Yet another distinctive feature of qualitative research methods is that the researcher is not preoccupied with numeric averages and percentages suggested by the data. Instead researchers in the qualitative tradition seek to understand the meanings research participants make of their work. The idea is to try to understand how people think (and talk) about what they do. What assumptions do they hold? What happens when these assumptions are challenged? In the context of the All Means All Project, I sought to understand how stakeholders understood the project philosophically, and how they experienced the reform practically. In particular, I sought to understand the difficulties that some stakeholders experienced with certain elements of restructuring. How did these difficulties and struggles reflect deeper social constructions that stakeholders carried in their minds about what schools, and students, and teaching should look like?

The All Means All Project at Kennedy School provides an observational case study of people involved in restructuring their classrooms and in re-imagining their roles and responsibilities to make their school wholly inclusive. This case is examined to provide insight into the elements and experiences involved in school restructuring. As Kennedy School stakeholders describe their understandings, challenges, and benefits, they demonstrate how reform of this magnitude challenges dominant cultural educational perspectives and practices. Studying this particular setting in detail, and over time, may shed light on larger issues that arise in this process.

Entrée

Like most research projects, there was a journey that led me to this one. Two years before I began conducting research on the All Means All Project, I had written a research paper based on undergraduate students' intrapersonal experiences with instructional grouping practices in K-12. That research project led me to two important understandings. First, the literature on de-tracking/ability grouping and the literature on inclusive education were similar in terms of best practices argued for by both sets of researchers. The second understanding I gained from this work was that special education, as it is often practiced in segregated settings, is not only a form of ability grouping (which I refer to as disability grouping) but that it may in fact be the purest form of ability grouping still practiced. As is often the case, once a student is labeled with an educational disability and placed in a segregated setting, s/he rarely returns to a general education classroom. I had reached a point in my own understanding to ask, "Then what?" What if students with disabilities are no longer in special, segregated settings, and what if students are not placed in ability groupings and tracked through school...then what?

At that time, I was discussing these things with my academic advisor and mentor, who is also the Dean of the School of Education. He suggested that I look into the All Means All Project for which two university professors were engaged, so I emailed them asking if I might attend the All Means All meetings. Within a week, I was in one of the schools, and this research project began to unfold. I realized that if special classrooms are closed and instructional groupings are no longer based on perceived dis/ability, then teachers have to learn how to teach all students experiencing a range of dis/abilities. That is exactly what the administrators and teachers at Kennedy School decided to do when the special classrooms were closed and all students began learning in general education classrooms. For me, whole-school inclusive reform is the next logical step in both inclusive education and in de-tracking.

I was informed about all project meetings by the university professors who led the All Means All Project—essentially they were my “entry” into the schools. They also were instrumental in guiding me through the research process. We had some parking lot conversations and at least one face-to-face meeting to discuss what I was learning in this process and how we might share joint publications that result from this research. Additionally, they had already secured approval for the All Means All Project from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from the school district. Part of their original IRB approval included having graduate student-researchers collect data. A slight amendment to the IRB was necessary to include a statement that specified that some of the graduate student researchers (me and two others) would be using the data collected for purposes of dissertation research. The amendment, written by me and signed by both university professors, was approved and is on file with the university’s Office of Research Integrity and Protections.

Context

Kennedy School

Kennedy School is located in a mid-size city in the northeastern US. It is a K-8 school in a district with more than 20,000 students. There are over 500 students who attend Kennedy each day. African American students comprise nearly 60 percent of the student population and white students comprise roughly 35 percent of the student body. Hispanic students, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and “unknown” make up the remaining five percent of the school’s population. The average median household income for the area is just under \$38,000. Over 60 percent of Kennedy students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The number of students identified as students with disabilities under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* is 26 percent, more than double the national average of 11-12 percent.

Under the *No Child Left Behind* accountability measures, Kennedy School failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2006-07 and fell on the list of schools in need of improvement. That same year, the All Means All Project was presented to Kennedy staff and they voted, overwhelmingly, for restructuring. The following school year, 2007-08, a veteran principal and assistant principal were transferred to Kennedy to lead the school back toward making adequate yearly progress. It should be noted here that these two administrators were not part of the initial decision to move forward with the project.

All Means All Project

The impetus for the All Means All Project began with two McKinley University professors. They had a vision for restructuring schools to realize more inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities. After gaining the support of the school district's superintendent and the teachers' union, the two professors presented the idea to a meeting of school principals. Seven of them expressed interest, so the next step was for the professors to present the project to the schools led by those administrators. Following each presentation, staff members were asked to vote on whether they wanted to move forward with the project or not. Three schools were ultimately chosen: Kennedy School, Woodrow Wilson School, and Bidwell School. The two university professors agreed to work with these three schools for a period of three years as each school designed a restructuring model specific to their own school context with the university professors providing ongoing professional development. Each of the above activities occurred prior to the beginning of my data collection.

Participants

Because this project is based on whole school reform, there are several levels of study participants. On a broad scale, the entire Kennedy School community, staff and students, is part

of the target population because this is *whole-school* reform, however, the only whole-school data I report are the achievement test scores of students provided by the university professors (see Chapter Six). Beyond the whole-school level, there were several participants who were more central to the restructuring process than others (see Table 1: Research Participants. It provides the pseudonyms of interviewees, their positions within the district, their genders, approximate ages, ethnicities, and the dates of the interview).

I also attended staff meetings, celebratory events, and I conducted some classroom observations (see Table 2: Data Collection Activities). The majority of data collected came from smaller monthly meetings (20 sets of notes), when the Kennedy School team met with the two university professors to discuss specific reform ideas, barriers, and strategies. Additional field notes include seven sets from the collaboration course taught at Kennedy by one of the university professors. In total, the above data collection activities yielded more than 1,000 pages of single-spaced qualitative fieldnotes and interview transcripts combined.

Investigator Biases and Assumptions

Like all researchers, I came to this project with my own experiences and lenses. Like all qualitative researchers, I was an instrument in the data collection, as everything I saw and heard was filtered through my beliefs, preferences, and experiences. In the opening paragraph for this chapter, I stated that qualitative methods allow researchers to understand their research participants' unique perspectives and behaviors, *mostly* through their own lenses. I say "mostly" because in qualitative research methods, the researcher is part of the process, an instrument through which all data and interpretation flows

Table 1 Research Participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Position within the District</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Approximate Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Date of Interview</i>
Anna Martinez	Special Educator at Kennedy School	F	25-30 yrs.	White	5/20/08
Yolanda Anderson	Special Educator at Kennedy School	F	30-35 yrs.	Black	10/17/08
Mike Correa	Special Educator at Kennedy School	M	25-30 yrs.	White	10/20/08
Deborah Levine	General Educator at Kennedy School	F	50-55 yrs.	White	10/29/08
John McSweeney	Special Educator at Kennedy School	M	40-45 yrs.	White	10/30/08
Jeannie Merell	General Educator at Kennedy School	F	40-45 yrs.	White	10/30/08
Linda Graham	Reading Specialist at Kennedy School	F	55-60 yrs.	White	11/04/08
Megan Ray	Special Educator at Kennedy School	F	20-25 yrs.	White	11/4/08
Diane Reed	Special Educator at Kennedy School	F	35-40 yrs.	White	11/13/08
Angela Kline	Principal at Kennedy School	F	55-60 yrs.	White	5/20/09

Delores Burnes	Assistant Principal at Kennedy School	F	40-45 yrs.	Black	5/20/09
Paul Wilson	Assistant Principal at Kennedy School	M	40-45 yrs.	White	5/20/09
Shaunda Storey	Principal at Woodrow Wilson School	F	55-60 yrs.	Black	6/5/09
David Phillips	Director of Special Education	M	40-45 yrs.	White	7/30/09
Robert LaPorte	Superintendent	M	55-60 yrs.	White	8/13/09

Table 2 Data Collection Activities (sets of notes and approximate number of pages)

	Meetings attended	School Observations	Professional Development	Celebratory Events	Interviews of Teachers	Interviews of Administrators
<i>Kennedy School</i>	9 AMA Project monthly mtgs. 3 full staff mtgs.	6 in-school observations 1 PTO mtg.	8 sets from collaboration course 3 sets from differentiation workshops	Documentary Premiere of <i>everyone!</i>	6 Special Ed Teachers 2 General Ed Teachers 1 Reading Specialist	3 School Administrators
<i>Woodrow Wilson School</i>	8 AMA Project monthly mtgs. 1 full staff mtg.	1 in-school observation	3 Collaboration & Co-teaching workshops	End-of-the-year celebration Banner-raising Celebration		1 School Administrator
<i>Bidwell School</i>	3 AMA Project monthly mtgs.		6 week site based course 1 workshop on autism			
<i>School District</i>				Administrator gathering State-of-the-schools address Premiere of <i>Including Samuel</i>		2 District Administrators
<i>McKinley University</i>	15 AMA Project planning mtgs.					
# of pages	355 pages	111 pages	226 pages	74 pages	173 pages	116 pages

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 4). For example, one of my biases is that I am a proponent of inclusive education, which comes from my own experience working in an inclusive pre-school program, from my graduate studies at a university that highly values inclusive philosophy and practice, and from my nephew who has always been denied an education in an inclusive classroom.

My subjectivity served as a lens through which my observations and interpretations flowed—a necessary, interpretative part of qualitative research methods. I also tried to remain cognizant of the ways that my subjectivity may have created methodological concerns. I sought to minimize these concerns by being self-reflective in my field notes and by continually questioning the assumptions I brought with me to this research (for an example, see Appendix A). I paid particularly close attention when something surprised me, for in that surprise, I was able to articulate what it was I expected to see or hear in the setting. This reflexivity helped make my subjective assumptions more transparent (for an example, see Appendix B).

My relationships with the two professors may also have influenced my data collection, findings and conclusions. I saw them on a weekly basis in the context of the All Means All planning meetings, but they were never my professors for required coursework. They are not on my dissertation committee and they did not read my qualifying examinations. I never attended any social events with them outside the context of the All Means All Project. Though I had previously met them, I had not become acquainted with them until this project surfaced as a possibility for research at the suggestion of my advisor. Nevertheless, I am a graduate student doing research on a project implemented by two professors, so the power distribution in our professional relationships was unequal.

I knew that negotiating this relationship might prove to be difficult. On the one hand, if I was a part of the All Means All university team, then Kennedy school teachers and administrators might not be forthcoming with me about their experiences in this process. On the other hand, if I did not work with the university team, then I ran the risk of not being involved at all—they were the ones who informed me of the meetings. Though we agreed to co-present and possibly co-publish the findings of my research, these are not individuals whom I will likely spend time with aside from conferences.

I have had to negotiate these relationships carefully and try to remain as neutral as possible. For example, I would never repeat some of the things said at the planning meetings by the professors to the study participants. Likewise, I would never repeat some of the things reported to me by study participants. I have had to wade through the data and decide if a particular comment was essential to understanding the reform movement, or if the comment was made by someone having a rough day. Snide remarks, for example, though recorded in my field notes, are not necessarily essential to understanding what was happening at Kennedy School. I have tried to stay focused on what I could learn from this research that I could pass along to other professionals looking to implement a similar reform. There were comments, however, made by study participants that gave me insight into things the professors could have done differently to make the reform run more smoothly. Those things are reported in this manuscript.

Methods and Procedure

Choosing a Research Site

The first All Means All Project meeting I attended was at Woodrow Wilson Elementary in August 2007. Following that meeting, I attended all project meetings at Kennedy School and Woodrow Wilson School and only a handful of meetings at Bidwell School. I chose Kennedy

School as the focus of this study because it was just beginning the reform process when I began attending meetings in September 2007. I knew I would gain a better understanding of whole school inclusive reform by studying the process from the beginning. I also chose this school because it is the only K-8 school out of the three; if anything, I reasoned, reform would be more difficult at this school because of the age and developmental range of the students and because of the differential school policies that often accompany middle school (e.g., departmentalization model).

I also attended the McKinley University All Means All Project weekly planning meetings where the researchers talked openly about the different schools (and people) involved in reform. Though I never formally presented at Kennedy School meetings with the McKinley team, during the first few months of data collection, I regularly offered to help them set up and distribute materials and handouts prior to the start of meetings.

Approximately four months into data collection, I realized that I wanted to focus on Kennedy School teachers' and administrators' experiences in this process. Since the university professors are inherently part of this process, I reasoned that I needed to put some distance between them and myself. What this meant was that I no longer volunteered to help set up for the meetings, though I did help when I was asked directly. I felt that it was important that Kennedy staff did not see me as part of the McKinley University team. I wanted the staff to feel free to talk to me openly about the process without having to worry that what they disclosed might be repeated to the university professors. There were several occasions when I showed up for meetings at schools only to find out that the meetings had been canceled. The university professors had notified the school staff but had not notified me of the cancellation. Rather than feel disappointment that I had made the trip for nothing, I understood this to mean that I was not

enough a part of the McKinley team to warrant a phone call, and that distance was one of my goals as a researcher.

So, I entered this research site feeling like a stranger. The only school staff person I recognized was a woman whom I had taken a graduate course with a few years prior. McKinley University researchers introduced me as “a doctoral student doing her dissertation on All Means All,” and I always sat amongst the school staff members while the professors facilitated the meetings from the front of the room. The more meetings I attended, the more I got to know the names and faces of the teachers and administrators. I continued to attend monthly planning meetings and interviewed major stakeholders in this process.

Observational Case Study

This project can be best described as an observational case study because: 1) the major data-gathering technique used was participant observation that was supplemented by more in-depth interviews; 2) the focus of the study was on a particular site, Kennedy School; and 3) the focus of the study was the negotiation and implementation of the All Means All Project within the school. In particular, I focused primarily on the group of people, teachers and administrators, who regularly attended the monthly planning meetings facilitated by the university professors (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 55).

Though the after-school planning meetings began as an artificial context, in that the group of participants who attended the meetings was not a naturally existing unit outside of them being employees at Kennedy School, that began to change over the course of several months. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) address this artificiality when they state, “Picking a focus, be it a place in the school, a particular group, or some other aspect, is always an artificial act, for you break off a piece of the world that is normally integrated” (p. 55). This was not a group of people

who were normally integrated—many of them spent their workdays in separate classrooms or floors of the school building. They could go days without seeing or interacting with one another. Interestingly enough, after two years of monthly meetings, the group began to feel less like an “artificial” context; in other words, because several of the research participants were regular attendees at these meetings, I could almost predict which teachers and administrators would be attending. What emerged was a core group of stakeholders who were invested in the restructuring process. Bodgan and Biklen (2003) believe that, “a good physical setting to study is one that the same people use in a recurring way” (p. 55). The teachers and administrators who attended the meetings used the space as a place to ask questions, to learn new strategies, to design the reform model, and to problem-solve through their difficulties.

Data Collection

I gained various perspectives over the span of two years utilizing two primary data collection methods: participant-observation and in-depth interviews. I also collected a small amount of observation data at Woodrow Wilson School, to be used as a check against what I was learning at Kennedy School. Again, Table 2: Data Collection Activities, delineates the sources of data collected, both by activities and by schools.

Participant-observation. Within two weeks of my initial email to the university researchers, I was introduced to all three schools: two professional development workshops at Woodrow Wilson School, entitled “Preparing for the Comprehensive Collaborative Model” and “Collaboration and Co-teaching,” a professional development workshop at Bidwell Elementary School titled, “An Introduction to Autism,” and a whole-school staff meeting at Kennedy School. These meetings were facilitated by the two university professors, and they introduced me as a doctoral student doing her research on the All Means All Project. At that point, I was trying to

become familiar with what the All Means All Project was about and to gain some knowledge about the three schools involved.

The initial days of data-gathering were primarily centered around observation. I was trying to absorb the environments, the particulars of the settings and the people involved. This period included sorting through who were the special education teachers, general education teachers, and who were the administrators. I was always greeted with smiles and “hellos” from meeting participants after being introduced by the university professors. Though feeling somewhat detached in those early days, I always sat at tables with school staff members, engaging in social talk prior to the start of meetings and at the conclusion of meetings. I reasoned that if I was to understand the perspectives of teachers and administrators, I had better sit with them, learn from them, and try to act like them as much as I could so that I did not stand out as a researcher, even though they all knew that was why I was there. I participated in small group discussions and activities with those people who sat near me. I changed my seating location at each meeting to gain different perspectives and to meet different stakeholders. Though I never felt like I became one of their group (e.g., I was never going to be a teacher or administrator at Kennedy School), eventually I established good rapport with many participants. When I eventually sought out individuals for interviews, I was able to contact them directly rather than going through the university professors.

During most project meetings, I took notes because there were others in the setting doing the same. This led to rich reconstructions of dialogues because I made sure to write down direct quotes by participants. In the event that I did not capture the entirety of the direct quote, I summarized what I had heard. On two occasions I was asked to take the minutes for the meetings

and to disseminate them to the larger group. Most meetings lasted one hour, yielding between 10-15 pages of single-spaced typed field notes.

Immediately following each meeting, I returned to my computer to write in-depth field notes of what had transpired during the meeting, including conversations that began prior to the start of the meeting and conversations that ended in the parking lot. The field notes included direct quotes from participants, questions they asked during the meetings, and other details of my experience in the setting. My reflective questions, comments, and concerns, in addition to ideas and connections that I was making about what I thought I was learning, were recorded in the field notes as “observer comments” and they appear throughout. On several occasions, during the process of data collection and analysis, I returned to my field notes. I was always struck by the way my typed text had the power to return me to the setting on that particular day. It was as if I could see the participants, where they sat, the clothes they were wearing, and their facial expressions as they articulated questions, concerns, and comments.

In-depth semi-structured interviews. After several months of collecting data utilizing participant-observation methods, I realized that I needed to understand how individual participants’ were making meaning of the All Means All Project on a deeper, more personal, level. I sought out individuals for interviews while I continued to attend the monthly planning meetings as a participant observer. For the interviews, I used a loosely structured guide of interview questions to begin each interview (see Appendix C) but in maintaining the fidelity of qualitative research methods, I allowed each interviewee to direct the content of the interview. I encouraged each participant to elaborate on topics and issues that they initiated and I followed up with more in-depth questions as I sought to more fully understand their perspectives.

The interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, observations, understandings, and stories in private, without the public stage of the larger group meetings. The in-depth interviews also allowed them the space and time to reflect upon their understandings and experiences. To ensure that a variety of perspectives were included, I utilized purposeful sampling (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003) by interviewing mostly teachers and administrators who were involved in the monthly planning meetings, including participants who openly shared their skepticism of restructuring in monthly meetings. I knew in advance that I wanted to interview the two former special class teachers, John McSweeney and Yolanda Anderson, because I reasoned that their new co-teaching roles were the most different from their roles prior to restructuring. I also knew that I wanted to interview administrators at Kennedy School and at the district level. I added the interview of Shaunda Storey, principal of Woodrow Wilson School to gain an additional perspective of leadership through restructuring. I interviewed Linda Graham, not so much because of her role as reading specialist for Kennedy school, but because of her connection to school administration. She had come to Kennedy School with Principal Angela Kline and her alliances with the leadership team were clear. Teachers often went to Linda with their struggles and questions, rather than go to the administrators themselves. I came to see Linda as another arm of the school leadership team. Anna Martinez attended most of the All Means All project meetings and she vocally supported restructuring; she was also a first year teacher so I thought her perspective was important to include. Jeannie Merrell figures prominently in the data. She was often outspoken against restructuring; she was also John McSweeney's new co-teaching partner, so I interviewed her as well. Deborah Levine described herself as a veteran teacher, with 25+ years teaching experience. She regularly voiced her frustrations and questions during the planning meetings. She also suggested to me that I get a new teacher's perspective by

interviewing Megan Ray. I followed up with this interview but it did not produce good data since Megan had never attended an All Means All Project planning meeting. She knew very little about the plans that went into restructuring. Diane Reed and Mike Correa are both special educators at the middle school level. I wanted to gain their perspectives about servicing students who are educated within a departmentalization model. Mike Correa had also attended some of the planning meetings.

Participant interviews spanned a time period from May 2008 to August 2009. My loosely-structured interview protocol was reviewed and approved by the two university researchers. Interviewees read and signed the IRB approved letter of consent that was created by the two university professors. All requests for interviews were granted. They ran from 45-90 minutes in length and were audio recorded.

Following each interview, sometimes the same day and sometimes several days later, I sat at my computer and began to transcribe the interviews. I quickly realized that the interviews that I transcribed immediately led to more rich transcripts. I was better able to recall facial expressions, sideways glances, gestures, and other body language when I transcribed the interview immediately. I learned that even though transcribing is a tedious process, it is also personally invaluable for researchers. I heard participants' voices, articulating their perspectives, as they played and re-played both as a recording on the tape and in my mind. With each re-play, I began to hear new things, which ultimately allowed me to more fully understand how they experienced their students, each other, and the process of reform.

I collected data from several sources over a two-year period. I attended All Means All Project monthly planning meetings at Kennedy School and I juxtaposed these data with data from planning meetings at two other schools. I attended three full-staff meetings at Kennedy and

another full-staff meeting at Woodrow Wilson. I conducted six in-school observations at Kennedy school and one at Woodrow Wilson. I attended professional development workshops at the three schools selected to participate in the All Means All Project. Interviews included six special education teachers, two general education teachers, one reading specialist, and six administrators (three at Kennedy School, one at Woodrow Wilson School, and two district administrators). Four months into the project, I decided to focus on Kennedy School, so my energies were always directed there first, but when time permitted, I continued to attend meetings at Woodrow Wilson as a check against what I was learning at Kennedy School.

The length of time spent in the field, the multiple perspectives of participants, and the breadth of methods used in collecting data reduces the likelihood that I am misinterpreting my participants' perspectives through the process of "using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, [and] verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2000, p. 443). Seeking the experiences of both teachers and administrators helped me understand the different perspectives involved in this process.

One of the challenges I encountered in this project was the representation of the data, in particular, the inflammatory remarks made by some of the participants. Inclusive educational reform, because it challenges cultural discourses that run through us, stirs passion and emotion. On the one hand, teachers and administrators are "vessels" through which school cultural discourses, policies, and procedures "flow." I tried not to judge what participants said about students' lack of abilities as offensive but instead as reflective of larger cultural discourses. On the other hand, I believe that teachers and administrators have agency within that "flow" to interrogate their own assumptions. I believe that whatever has been socially constructed, has the power to be de-constructed and ultimately re-constructed given new experiences. So, while

trying not to place a value judgment on participants' perspectives, my hope is that participants learn to be accountable for the discourses that they perpetuate. My challenge was to maintain the integrity of the research process by using data as it appeared in the fieldnotes, while simultaneously trying to not make this feel distasteful to participants who may read this manuscript.

Data Analysis

As I wrote extensive fieldnotes in a word document (see Appendices A and B for excerpts), I printed each set and organized them into one of four binders, each complete with a table of contents. Binders 1-3 are organized chronologically. Within each binder, there are sections divided by schools (Kennedy, Woodrow Wilson, and Bidwell) and by activities (planning meetings, professional development course, etc.). Binder 4 contains all interview transcripts spanning 15 months.

During the initial stages of data collection, I tried to capture everything I saw and heard. I had yet to focus this project on teachers and administrators. Every two months, I reviewed my fieldnotes in the binders. The more I learned about Kennedy School and about the All Means All Project, the more the first few sets of notes began to make sense, and I began to make notes in the margins that suggested possible issues and connections that I saw emerging. I made a preliminary list of codes and potential interview questions (see Appendix D) in February 2008.

Four months into data collection, I decided that the perspectives of teachers and administrators were what interested me most. I could hear them grappling with what restructuring meant and how it might be implemented through their questions and comments. I constructed research questions based on this focus and began to pay close attention to what stakeholders said in meetings and less attention to what the university researchers presented. I

began writing memos to myself trying to make sense of how stakeholders were talking about restructuring.

Once school restructuring was underway, I became particularly interested in how stakeholders talked about students. Students, who were initially represented as numbers on school restructuring maps, soon became students with names and with perceived problems—problems that were constructed as too big to address in general education classrooms. The task of putting together different perspectives (e.g., stakeholders' talk about restructuring and stakeholders' talk about individual students) into a meaningful whole is an example of what Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to as “Integrating categories and their properties” (p. 108).

I began to limit my data collection activities to those that I anticipated would provide more rich data. For example, I stopped going to the semester-long professional development course taught by the university professors when I realized that this venue became one in which professors were mostly disseminating information to participants. These class meetings were not producing rich data from teachers and administrators that would help me understand their experiences. This is an example of theoretical sampling because I chose each next step as I simultaneously collected and analyzed data. Both tasks, data collection and analysis, became more focused in the process of “Delimiting the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 109).

This sort of data analysis can best be described as the constant comparative method, where “analysis and data collection [occur] in a pulsating fashion” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 66). As I continued collecting data, I revised my coding scheme into primary and secondary codes and sought to understand how the data fit or failed-to-fit the categories that I constructed in understanding the social processes and relationships at work in this setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) (See Appendix E: Codes and Subcodes). Some of the categories I constructed myself (e.g.,

“subjective educational labels” and “fears”) while others I abstracted from the language used by participants (e.g., “marriage” and “childbirth”).

The constant comparative method requires data saturation rather than an attempt to prove the universality of some theory. By the end of two years, I had reached a point in data collection where I was learning fewer and fewer new things, so I decided it was time to leave the field.

Data collection, via participant observation, officially ended with the close of the school year, June 2009, though the summer of 2009 included interviews with the district superintendent and the director of special education. Once those interview transcripts were complete, I began a complete read-through of the field notes and interview transcripts, making notes in the margins reflecting the themes of each paragraph. I then read through only the margin notes further adjusting the codes and sub codes. I read-through the entire set of notes twice more, applying the codes to each paragraph. For example, when a school administrator made the statement, “When you think back to it now, it’s almost like childbirth, you know, when the pain’s over, you forget. But it really was a really rough summer getting all of this together for us,” I listed the reference to childbirth under the code for “Family metaphors.” Other references that were coded under “Family metaphors” included: “marriage,” “divorce,” “baby-steps,” “bundle of joy,” and “dys/functional family.” I also made note of the instances when none of the codes seemed to reflect the content of the paragraph. At times this meant scrutinizing my codes to see if I overlooked something important that I needed to add, or if I could collapse two codes into one. Following the final complete read-through, I began inserting excerpts of coded data into tables. This process focused the data into organized and manageable parts whereby I could more easily search for patterns and begin to interpret what these data meant. What eventually emerged, by way of grounded theory methods, was the realization that cultural discourses about students and

their dis/abilities are entrenched in schooling structures, procedures, and practices. When those structures, procedures, and policies are disrupted, the constructions that teachers and administrators hold of students becomes more pronounced.

The cultural discourses about students became more pronounced when the self-contained classrooms closed. In Chapter 4, readers will be introduced to a student named DeMarcus. Stakeholders constructed an identity for DeMarcus that was linked to the self-contained classroom, even though that placement no longer existed. In addition to these cultural discourses, there was also a good deal of skepticism that came from the key group of stakeholders. Chapter 5 highlights how that skepticism stalled restructuring efforts in the beginning. Finally, in Chapter 6, stakeholders arrived at a place where they saw the benefits of their work both for students and for themselves.

CHAPTER 4

“DeMarcus is E. D. ...he is the label”: The Social Construction of (formerly) “Self-contained Kids”²

There was significant discussion by Kennedy school teachers and administrators about “self-contained kids” during the 2007-08 school year as the staff held monthly planning meetings to discuss restructuring. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which stakeholders talked about children because through their talk, they reveal the ways in which they have constructed stories about, and expectations for, particular students. These discussions highlight some of the ways in which teachers and administrators engaged in the social construction of stigmatized, clinical identities of children. These solidified constructions of students led to teachers experiencing real challenges in their attempts to include them.

This chapter is based on data collected from monthly planning meetings and from interviews with stakeholders. These data are not drawn from observations in special classrooms, but rather from public (monthly meetings) and private (interviews) narratives about “self-contained” spaces, locations, placements, and students. Talk of students who were formerly placed in the self-contained classrooms highlights how stakeholders construct students in these settings. These constructions are important because they may carry over even after students’ placements change to general education classrooms.

Self-Contained Classrooms, Students, and Teachers

Making Students Invisible

Before becoming an educational researcher, Terry Jo Smith (1997) was hired to work in a classroom with students described as “severely emotionally disturbed.” On the first day of her

² “E.D.” in this context refers to Emotional Disturbance, which New York State identifies as one eligibility category for special education.

hire, she was explicitly told by the principal, “I need someone who can keep those kids from being so visible, from disturbing the whole school” (p. 7). Smith (2001) realized that when students are distinguished as *other*, as different from the majority, they are more easily relegated to spaces where they will not be seen nor heard.

So who are the students who tend to be placed in these classrooms? The special classrooms at Kennedy School had been filled with students described as “hard-core cases,” who had gang affiliations at their previous schools. The district rationale, according to teacher, John McSweeney, was to take these students out of their environments (schools known to have gang affiliations) and send them to Kennedy School (where there was no perceived gang activity). John stated that the “imported” students were making the environment at Kennedy “very hard to deal with” and parents were complaining. John explains, “That’s why I think you got that, ‘You’re over here. And the rest of the school’s over here.’” Students were deemed too dangerous to be in general education classrooms, so the school created an artificial environment for students; artificial because students were not necessarily attending their home school, they were not necessarily integrated with their same-aged peers, and they were not receiving grade-level academic instruction. This school structure likely perpetuates feelings of disconnect and alienation among the students in these classrooms and within the rest of the school. So part of the strict separation between “self-contained kids” and the rest of the school was a result of placement decisions made at the district central office. Many of the students in Kennedy’s self-contained classrooms were rendered invisible when district-level administrators made these placement decisions and when Kennedy School teachers were not prepared to support students who had behavioral challenges.

Several stakeholders at Kennedy School remarked how much easier it is to work with students who have visible disabilities like cerebral palsy because, as reading specialist Linda Graham explained, “You can see that that child is special. I’m not saying special in a bad way but you can see that. But somebody who has Emotional Disturbance (ED), you can’t see it.” Statements such as this suggest that students with emotional and behavioral struggles are more challenging for teachers to figure out how to support them, in part because they do not look special—in other words, because they look like the majority of other students. Even District Superintendent, Robert LaPorte, has heard teachers say, “Give me this kid that’s multiply handicapped. It’s these kids [with behavior] that are tearing up my class.” Robert explained, “Everybody focuses on the kid in the wheelchair, the kid with Down syndrome. I think what we should be telling stories about are all those other kids that we have put in self-contained classrooms.” So, at least as far as the superintendent is concerned, there is a paucity of stories that focus on students placed in self-contained classrooms. It should not go unmentioned here that the special education categories Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disabilities, and Learning Disabilities are the categories that have the highest rate of disproportionality for African American and Hispanic students (Fierros & Conroy, 2002). These categories are also referred to as “high judgment categories” because they rely on educational and psychological assessments/judgments rather than on more objective biological data such as what is available for students with hearing or visual impairments (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer (2010).

Prior to the implementation of the All Means All Project, the Director of Special Education, David Phillips, reports that there was little thought that went into the placement of students with disabilities. David explained that the district policy for placing students with disabilities in special classrooms was based on open slots, rather than on matching students’

needs with teachers' personalities and/or practices, classroom location, or school. David remarked:

You didn't even think about the program that a child needed. You just looked and said, 'Oh, there's an opening there in a 12:1:1.' It was more looking for a space, as opposed to really looking at the quality of what's going on in this classroom. We knew that there were MR kids in this classroom and there were ED kids in this classroom. That's all you knew. You knew the type of disability.

David's mention of "12:1:1" refers to a special classroom placement in which there are twelve students, one special education teacher, and one paraprofessional. According to the New York State Education Department [NYSED] (2010), Regulation 200.6 (h) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specifies the special class size for students with disabilities:

The maximum class size for those students whose special education needs consist primarily of the need for specialized instruction which can best be accomplished in a self-contained setting shall not exceed 15 students, or 12 students in a State- operated or State-supported school, except that:

(i) The maximum class size for special classes containing students whose management needs interfere with the instructional process, to the extent that an additional adult is needed within the classroom to assist in the instruction of such students, shall not exceed 12 students, with one or more supplementary school personnel assigned to each class during periods of instruction.

In other words, if an instructional assistant is required for student support in the special class, the maximum number of students in that class should be twelve. If no additional support personnel are necessary, the number of students can be as high as fifteen. David's quote above suggests

that the district had designated certain special classes specifically for students with particular educational labels, Mental Retardation (MR) and Emotional Disturbance (ED). Placement decisions for students were made based on educational classification labels and on openings rather than on individual students' needs.

David Phillips described the process prior to re-structuring, "What we do now is throw a student in a self-contained classroom, say a prayer, wish the teacher good luck, and close the door." So invisible were these classrooms and the students and teachers who occupied these spaces that the rest of Kennedy School sometimes "forgot" to invite them to school-wide functions. Recall the opening vignette in Chapter 1 where Yolanda Anderson, a former special class teacher at Kennedy School, described how her class was regularly omitted from fieldtrip lists. She constantly had to remind others, "Hey, we're here. Don't forget about us."

Once a student was placed in a special class, in most cases it was for the duration of the school day. In other words, even though the student may have been excelling in math, there was no leaving the special classroom to attend a general education math class with nondisabled peers because those distinctions were not made on the student's IEP. According to David Phillips, "the state has cited [the district] for not having differentiated IEPs" that would allow for such flexibility.

Even though some researchers have suggested that NCLB performance standards have resulted in "No More Invisible Kids" (Haycock, 2006), students in Kennedy's special classrooms were still not "counted" in the same ways that other students in the building were counted. For example, even though students in self-contained classrooms were given state tests, Principal Angela Kline remarked, "We didn't even have data on these special ed kids except the state scores. I don't really know what was going on in the rooms...there were so many levels and so

much chaos.” However, since the reform, she says, “Every kid in the school is leveled now. We know what reading level they’re on. Prior to that we had no idea. We had kids on kindergarten and first grade reading levels in the middle school.” Therefore, when special classrooms were closed and students with disabilities were integrated into general education classrooms, they became more visible, at least in terms of their reading levels.

Reading specialist, Linda Graham, transitioned to Kennedy School with Administrator Angela Kline, the summer after Kennedy staff voted to move forward with the All Means All Project but before any restructuring planning meetings or professional development began. Linda attended many of the monthly planning meetings. I interviewed her after the special classrooms had closed and students had been moved into general education classrooms. At that time she was concerned about the (formerly self-contained) fifth and sixth grade students who were still not reading. I asked her if she thought these kids are capable of reading and she said:

If they had the right kind of intervention, at the right time, who knows? I don’t know their cognitive ability. I don’t look at their IQ scores or anything like that, but I think the right kind of intervention at the right time in their lives, that it probably could have been. And were they getting that in the self-contained class? No, I don’t think so.

Linda’s statement about there being a right time for intervention implies that there must also be a wrong time for intervention, or at the very least a period when it is too late for intervention. If teachers miss that window of opportunity, then what do they do? Do they simply stop teaching students how to read? Of course there are multiple adult literacy programs designed to teach adults how to read and write. Another flaw in Linda’s logic is her conflation of cognitive ability, or ability to read, with IQ scores. She unfortunately shares a belief of many educators that a

number from a standardized test would provide her with information about whether or not a student could be taught to read.

I then questioned Linda about why students were not getting literacy intervention in the special classroom settings. My reasoning followed that if these students had the lowest reading levels, they would be the recipients of the most intensive literacy interventions. So I asked, “Did you do any type of push-in intervention?” Linda’s response surprised me:

Basically no. There was really no intervention there. [One class] already had 6:1 [student to teacher ratio] and then the other was a 12:1 class. I gave a lot of [whole school] staff development on how to differentiate for comprehension, how to teach vocabulary, you know, all the components of early literacy. And both teachers, from the self-contained [classes] did attend those workshops, so it was then just putting it into practice.

I pushed Linda further, “Do you know if they implemented..?” She interjected, “I don’t really believe they did. Because it’s easy to take out a workbook, a first grade workbook, you know.”

In other words, students were not reading well, were not receiving literacy intervention from the reading specialist, and there was no follow-up with special education teachers after the staff workshop on early literacy development. Moreover, Linda also exposes an assumption in her statement, that because students are in smaller classes, they should, at least theoretically, be the recipients of more focused and individualized instruction. “More focused” because the class size is reduced, which means that the teacher to pupil ratio would be smaller. Thus, with a reduced student-teacher ratio, students should get more focused time and attention from their teacher. Instruction should also be “more individualized” because each student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Again, this *should* mean that each child’s educational program would be designed to specifically address the child’s individual educational needs. But,

apparently, as long as students in special classrooms remain invisible, these kinds of assumptions about the efficacy of segregated classrooms remain unchallenged.

When stakeholders at Kennedy School talked about closing the special classrooms, many of them discussed fear (e.g., fear of being alone with students in the classroom when the special educator was working in another classroom). I was curious about the fear expressed by teachers, so I asked John McSweeney directly about the demographics of students in his class prior to restructuring. He responded:

The first two years, I had 12-15 kids, mostly black boys with 4 girls, all ages 9-12. The boys were all black males except two, and they were mixed race. The girls were one white, two black, and one mixed. None of the students had parents that were professionals except two of them who were nurses. Two of them were [from] military families and the rest were on some type of public assistance or disability. Yolanda's class was similar but it had a split of girls and boys. Many of the students were the caretakers or primary source of childcare when the parents were not at home.

The overrepresentation of students of color in special classes has been recognized for more than four decades. As early as 1968, Lloyd Dunn drew attention to the number of Latino, African-American, and Native American students placed in classrooms for students presumed to have mental retardation. Today, the overrepresentation of African-Americans and Native Americans persists on a national level (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, Higareda, 2005). Black students are more likely than white students to be labeled with Mental Retardation, Emotional Disturbance, and Learning Disabled. Latino students, while under-identified in elementary school, are over-identified in high school. These findings cannot be explained solely by socioeconomic

differences as Black and Latino students in wealthier neighborhood schools are more likely to be labeled than Black and Latino students in poorer neighborhood schools (Ferri & Connor, 2006).

Low Expectations for Students and Difficult Expectations for Teachers

My use of narrative excerpts below is not meant for the purpose of demeaning any individuals involved in this very important and difficult restructuring work, but rather I use these examples as windows into the cultures in which teachers and administrators work.

Former special class teacher, Yolanda Anderson, describes the vast range of students in her classroom. She had 15 students, ranging in age from 11-13 years, with a range of disabilities including: Other Health Impaired, Bipolar, Emotionally Disturbed, and Learning Disabled. Academically, Yolanda describes her students' math and reading levels as ranging from kindergarten through 8th grade. She describes daily life in that classroom as "chaotic" because she was responsible for getting grade level curriculum for all subjects, across four different grade levels, 4th through 7th, and then modifying the material to make it accessible to students. Within this context, Yolanda says, "It was pretty hard to try to be flexible, so most of the time I was starting at 4th grade level lessons and just modifying it up for the kids at their levels." The Kennedy School special education teachers were taught special education methods exclusively in their teacher preparation programs. They were not necessarily taught middle school content, for example. This becomes problematic when special education teachers receive subject material from content teachers that they themselves do not know or understand. The problem is further exacerbated when the special class teachers are physically isolated from the other classrooms and when special class teachers do not participate in team planning.

Self-contained classrooms at Kennedy school were organizational structures with difficult teaching expectations for teachers. This makes me question the school staff's concern,

or the lack thereof, with students' learning. If, as researcher Terry Jo Smith (1997) described, the expectation was to keep students from being visible and to keep them from disturbing the school, this likely pushed aside academic expectations. However, if we insert a framework that presupposes academic expectations, then it becomes easier to see how teachers are constrained by the artificially created contexts of special classrooms. It would also be difficult for teachers to master all content material across multiple grade levels. In Chapter Six, I present one of the benefits of the All Means All Project—that former special class teachers learned academic information and content that they had not known previously, once they, too, became included in general education classrooms.

From the outside looking in, Administrator Angela Kline reflects on her frustration with the segregated classroom teachers, “They really weren’t doing anything in that self-contained room.” Angela sent Assistant Principal, Delores Burns, who had been an administrator at Kennedy for several years, to the special class teachers with evidence of their teaching ineffectiveness. Delores told them, “Your kids are not learning. Look at it. Here’s the documentation. They’re not learning. They’re in a room by themselves. You’re in here, the special ed teacher, but they’re not learning. We need to do something differently.” Angela added, “We showed them the scores—that we had kids in 7th and 8th grade at kindergarten levels, that have been here since kindergarten, so what have they been doing with those kids?” Delores met with teachers to assess the educational benefits of students’ IEPs. She showed the teachers the IEPs and said, “Kids have been here for three years and there’s been no changes on the IEP. Therefore, the educational benefits of the program you offered is zero. So, basically you just wasted three years.”

Once the special classrooms were closed and students were integrated into general education classrooms, it became more apparent that these students had missed valuable educational opportunities. Angela explains her reaction, “We were shocked by the way these kids are jumping and reading. So, how come they’re reading now and they couldn’t read two years ago? It was instruction. The key is instruction and they weren’t getting it.” Usually when people feel “shocked” it is because they are seeing or hearing something that they did not expect to see or hear. The element of surprise often sheds light on the assumptions an individual carries into the situation—in this case, low expectations for students’ abilities to read. Angela continues:

We’re raising the bar now for them. They’re in the classrooms. They’re learning. They’re hearing. They’re listening to what the teachers are presenting and that was never put before them. I’m not saying they’re gonna be rocket scientists when they leave, but, you know...

Of course, should we assume with any certainty that these students will not be rocket scientists? What goes into the making of a rocket scientist anyway?

John McSweeney, former self-contained teacher remarked, “All Means All puts everyone in the mindset that this kid has possibility. Before we didn’t have that. When I was in self-contained, it was like, ‘Oh, these kids in the self-contained...they’re gonna be changing the wiring on the car.’” At this point in the interview, John’s co-teacher, Jeannie Merrell interjected, “...they’re all losers. Nothing’s gonna happen with them.” Yet again, when students in special classrooms are isolated, and are not often seen or thought of, special educators have to do their best to teach students in these artificially constructed contexts under difficult pedagogical conditions. Given such “chaotic” learning environments, it was not surprising to learn that students were held to minimal academic expectations. Teachers’ understandings of their

students, however, also play a critical role in their interactions with, and in their learning expectations for, their students.

Social Construction of Aggressive, Stigmatized, Clinical Identities

In a 1992 article, David A. Goode describes “clinical blinders” that were used to create a framework for interpreting the institutionalized behavior of a 50 year-old man with Down syndrome, named Bobby. Bobby’s clinical records constructed the picture of an individual who was essentially incompetent and hopeless. The absence of any positive interactions in his clinical records, interactions that might construct Bobby as competent, meant that everything he said and did was perceived by others through the lens of incompetence. It was only when Goode removed the “clinical blinders” that he could finally see Bobby’s humanity and his competence. Goode (1992) argues, “the same person may have different identities and exhibit dissimilar behaviors depending on the interactional context” (p. 209). What this means for students in special classrooms is that how they are perceived and described by others is at least in part socially produced by teachers, other students, and the organizational structure of the school.

Kennedy’s self-contained classrooms were described as “male-dominated environments,” where, according to Assistant Principal Paul Wilson, fights were common and “girls had to be tough to stick up for themselves.” There was some talk by teachers and administrators about self-contained students who struggle with speech and language and there were other students who were described as having multiple disabilities. But, by and large, stakeholders’ talk about students in formerly self-contained classrooms revolved around student behavior and/or emotional struggles.

Superintendent Robert LaPorte stated (above) that teachers prefer teaching students with multiple handicaps over students who are “tearing up my class,” even though Robert articulates

the irony in this construction, that “out on the street, you couldn’t tell the difference, physically, from [these kids to the next]. But inside the classroom, they’re the kids that are misbehaving.”

Administrator Paul Wilson describes the self-contained classrooms as full of “concentrated anti-social behavior.” Yolanda Anderson concurred, that in a 15:1 classroom, there are a lot of behaviors and the students just play off each other. The concern over students with behavioral struggles was part of the reason why general education teacher, Jeannie Merrell stated:

When we got closer to this model, toward the end of the year, John and some of the other special ed teachers were saying, ‘We really need to look at this. We really need to look at some of these children because there are some children who will not work well with this model.’ And the administration kept saying, ‘Nope. We’re keeping all our kids.’

While on its face, this seems like an important stand taken by administrators—that staff should not decide which students fit (or don’t fit) the model, it falls short of asking teachers to critically reflect upon their perspectives about who does/does not “work well within this model.” Given the fact that students of color are more likely to be placed in more restrictive placements than their white peers who share the same disability classification, educators should be encouraged to question these kinds of assumptions (Fierros & Conroy, 2002)

When stakeholders described students in special classrooms, they often conflated two or more educational labels or medical diagnoses. David Phillips, Director of Special Education, explained:

I think the big challenge has been those ED kids that are more conduct disordered. These are kids that have got a really clear disability but they’re making some pretty significant choices around their behavior....They struggle with their reading, so they start acting up. They throw a chair so they get kicked out of class. You learn that getting kicked out of

class, you don't have to read. [It's] a vicious cycle. So, I think the conduct disordered kids are the biggest challenge.

David hired a behavioral support person who was trained in crisis prevention and intervention. This individual worked primarily in a school that was set aside by the district as a program for K-12 students described as "severely emotionally disturbed." When pushed for an explanation as to why these students were considered the most challenging, David responded, "Every one of them is behavior. No academic issues. I mean there were academic issues, but the reasons why they were coming was behavior." When David says, "Every one of them is behavior," he is positioning individual students as their disabilities; they may have secondary academic struggles but who they are is inseparable from their disability. The foundation for a separate school for students with behavior was to provide a "heavier emphasis on the little ones, to try to get them fixed and supported and moving in the right direction and then get them back out into our schools as quickly as possible." David fails to mention what happens with the older students; there seems to be less emphasis on getting *them* "fixed" and "supported" so that they too are "moving in the right direction."

I asked reading specialist, Linda Graham, how all of this talk about behavior manifests in the classroom and she replied:

It's putting out fires a lot. [The university professors] say get rid of the chair, burn the chair, well, you know, sometimes those kids, if the chair isn't there, and if the provider's not sitting next to the child, they're gonna hit other kids.

Linda has constructed a picture of students who hit other students, for no apparent reason, unless an adult is sitting next to them. So what does this description of behavior suggest about Linda's assumptions and perspectives? She continues:

And if my child were in that room, with a child like that going off, I would demand my child be removed. I wouldn't want my child, spoken as a mother, to be a babysitter for a child who's...you know, I just think it's wrong. I have a really rough time with this. I don't know if it's for everybody. I think it's good for the special ed kids, but I don't know how good it is for the rest of the school population.

When Linda says, "If my child were in that room, with a child like that going off, I would demand that my child be removed," there's a sense that she needs to protect her child from exposure to something dangerous. This reminds me of another staff member who said at a previous meeting, "What about the kids who aren't appropriate for regular ed classrooms? As a parent, I wouldn't want my 8 year-old child hearing the things that come out of the mouths of some of these kids." One disability classification that might include things that "come out of the mouths of some of these kids" as not appropriate would be Tourette Syndrome, yet I have never heard anyone mention Tourettes at Kennedy. Instead, I think she may have been talking about what "comes out of the mouths of some of these kids" who are racially and culturally different from her. Both Linda and the other staff member, quoted above, are middle-aged white women. Perhaps they seek to protect their children from racial and cultural differences of students whom are unlike their own children. While this seems to be an individualized perspective, that "I want what's best for my kid," it fails to acknowledge that most parents want what's best for their children. Linda's comments suggest that she cannot or does not identify with these students. She cannot or does not think about what she would want for her own child if he/she was labeled with an emotional disturbance.

Once I understood the construction of students as "hard core cases," as "tearing up the classroom," as "throwing chairs," etc. it made more sense to me that teachers were talking about

fear. At one monthly planning meeting a teacher voiced “some concerns” she said she heard from other teachers:

People are afraid of being alone in the classroom for even part of the day without a special ed teacher. So, I think they are aware of the plan, but there’s a lot of fear. Fear of being alone. Fear of not having time to plan.

A speech therapist voiced an interesting concern, as she articulated, “I’ve only pushed into self-contained classrooms, so I don’t know what it would look like to push-into an inclusive classroom.” She further expressed, “I don’t want to fall into being a glorified aide. That’s not what I went to speech for.” This perspective suggested that she has had limited exposure to students in inclusive classrooms because she pulled students out of those classrooms to provide speech and language therapy. But she “pushed into” the self-contained classrooms, which could mean that she did not feel safe or self-equipped to pull any of the special class students by herself for therapy. Further, if she was not concerned about falling into the role of being a “glorified aide” in self-contained classrooms, what does this suggest about her role in those classrooms? It is difficult to conceptualize the effectiveness of speech and language therapy in classrooms that have been described by others as “chaotic.”

Another teacher was concerned with the “severity of the special ed students” and about “getting help when the assistant or special ed teacher is out.” Stories coming out of special classrooms, in addition to the absence of knowing these students individually, perpetuate the myth that they are too dangerous and too disabled to be in general education classrooms.

Preparing Students for Re-Structuring

How do you begin to transition students from self-contained classrooms to general education classrooms? Administrator Angela Kline seemed pleased that some mainstreaming

began the year before the self-contained classrooms were closed. In particular, she publicly “saluted” Yolanda for working her students into classrooms. She says, “They’re sitting there learning and the classrooms have welcomed them in. We started with a little piece this year. I think we’re all gonna be happy down the road.” Angela’s next statement was, “Some of the students are ready to age out, but we’re working on keeping them here.” “Aging out” is a phrase used to describe what happens when students in special classes turn 13 years-old. Yolanda’s special classroom was a placement for 11-13 year olds. At the end of the school year when students turned 13, they aged out of the program even if their grade of record was 6th grade. They went on to other self-contained programs at other middle schools. The first time I heard that Kennedy may not have kept all of their students after the self-contained classes were closed was at a weekly planning meeting held by the university professors to discuss professional development within the schools. I made a mental note to follow up.

What I found over the next several months was real confusion. There was no clear consensus about whether or not students had been sent out of Kennedy. I raised the question while interviewing fifth grade teachers, Jeannie Merrell and John McSweeney. A transcription of the interview segment follows:

Jeannie: We’ve got all our kids.

Nicole: I thought that there were some...

John: ...didn’t transfer. No kids got transferred out.

Nicole: I thought there were...

John: There was just a few that really were probably on the brink of leaving anyway...

Jeannie: Right.

John: ...cause of their suspensions and they're needing some things, but there were a handful of other ones, probably ten kids that really wanted to move into either a...

Jeannie: Self-contained. Another self-contained somewhere else.

This transcript exemplifies the vague and ambiguous responses I received from stakeholders. I reasoned that either stakeholders really did not know what happened with students or they were not being forthcoming. Perhaps it was a little of both. It may be reasonable to assume that teachers did not know what happened to students in former self-contained classrooms because they essentially were not part of the majority school population. It is possible that teachers were not aware that students were sent out because of how these students were rendered invisible even while they were still in the school. In other words, I do not know that teachers were acquainted enough with the students in Yolanda's class to know when they were missing.

John moves from saying, "No kids were transferred out," to "there were a few who were on the brink of leaving anyway," to "probably ten kids that really wanted to move into either a..." self-contained or something else. John does not clarify what he means when he says "a few who were on the brink of leaving anyway." He doesn't explain the basis for students leaving and he doesn't identify who is responsible for this happening. The discrepancy between "no kids" were transferred to "ten kids," is significant, especially after the year-long professional development provided by the university professors that reiterated the importance of all students belonging. John frames his statement as it being about the *kids* who really wanted to move to more restrictive placements, though I am not convinced that stakeholders asked the 13 year-old students what kind of placement they wanted. Emphasizing that it was the students who wanted to leave absolves John, and by extension the school, of responsibility for not keeping students at Kennedy School.

The topic of students aging out was raised by Yolanda during my interview with her. She said:

There are kids that were in my class last year that are in the program this year and they are doing a lot better than they were in that 15:1 class.... I wish that most of the kids that were in my class from last year actually got to stay in this program, but it didn't work out, so...

When I followed up and asked Yolanda how many of her former students stayed at Kennedy, she responded, "Six out of fifteen." The nine students who did not stay were moved to other special classroom programs at other middle schools in the district. Yolanda explained, "They age-out at 13 but because of this project, now they can continue through middle school but the powers-that-be didn't think that they were appropriate for the program." I asked if those decisions had been made at CSE meetings and Yolanda said she thought they were made at the end of the school year when final report cards were sent home. When I asked her how the parents handled this news, Yolanda described:

It was kind of sugar-coated for the parents. It was like, you know, 'They're aging out of our program and when they age-out, they go to another school' and they were never told that we are an All Means All school now and that they can continue. So most of the parents just figured, 'Okay. They're aging out.' If they did know, it probably wouldn't have went as smooth.

Yolanda's comments suggest a more concerted effort to choose which students were appropriate for the model and which were not.

Several months later another doctoral student, Kevin, and I broached the topic during our interview with Kennedy School administrators:

Nicole: The two self-contained classes closed last year, did all of those students go into...

Angela: We kept all...most of our kids, didn't we? Or did some of them age-out?

Delores: Except the ones that were going on to middle school and their parents didn't want them to stay. The others we kept.

Kevin: So it's just age?

Delores: It was just age. Middle school. Because our last one, the kids would leave at the age of thirteen. We sent them to Murray School for middle school. So they closed one of Murray's 15:1 classes and we kept most of ours, I think, except for two.

Nicole: There's no sending kids out based on their disability?

Angela and Delores both answer: No.

A few minutes later in the interview, Paul informed us:

This year, nobody's aging out and nobody's coming in, so instead of sending our kids out, we've got some kids that are going to eighth grade next year that would have left us because they were aged out, but David [Phillips] is now basically stretching the age range, on the top end. So instead of moving out and getting new kids, we'll just keep 'em.

Again, during my interview with Yolanda, she shared with me that only six of her 15 formerly self-contained students continued their educational programs at Kennedy once the special classes were closed. This topic raises important questions about parental involvement in this process. At the time these placement decisions were made, staff members had not yet informed parents about the All Means All Project and what the restructuring process might mean for students. At that time, stakeholders themselves were still grappling with the incorporation of new language, new roles and identities, and new teaching practices.

Of the students who stayed at Kennedy, some of them were engaged in a more concerted transition effort. John did two things to ease the transition for his students; he mainstreamed some of them for some subjects and he taught his 4th grade students some of the material they could expect to see in 5th grade. Now, he says:

The kids know what's coming up so a lot of the stuff we're doing in science, they've already experienced, they can feel confident. Math, they feel a little more confident. So, I think maybe coordination of those kinds of curriculum things would help the kids to transition.

John sent some of his students, for two periods a day, to Jeannie's classroom and to another teacher's room for reading and math. He describes this as a "natural process" that *some* students would go to another classroom for a period or two and then return to the self-contained classroom, but "at the same time, not everybody." John says of the 2007-08 school year, "Now it's like everybody [and] I don't think we were prepared for that." John's comment suggests that sending all students to general education classrooms all the time is not considered a natural process. What I find interesting in his statement is that stakeholders, including John, discussed restructuring at the All Means All monthly planning meetings that centered on creating a sense of belonging for all students and increasing access to academics in general education classrooms. The importance of students feeling like they belong to the classroom and school community was made clear on several occasions. By John saying that "now it's everybody [and] I don't think we were prepared for that," he seems to have either missed these key concepts of the All Means All Project or he has not (personally and professionally) bought into the core principles of belonging and access to academics for all students.

Perhaps part of John's position was, to some degree, reflective of the school community's transition from using self-contained placements to eliminating them. In March of the planning year, prior to annual reviews, John asked administrators, "Should we write their IEPs as if they are going into an all-inclusive classroom or should we write their IEPs as if they're going to be back in self-contained classrooms?" John was advised by the administration that he could not yet write IEPs that reflected an inclusive placement, because parents did not yet know this was happening. So, even after restructuring, and the elimination of self-contained classrooms, students' IEPs still reflected a special educator support ratio of 15 students to one teacher.

Not all stakeholders were as positive about the mainstreaming in which John and Yolanda were engaged. Some of them questioned what students were learning through their experiences with mainstreaming. Assistant Principal Paul Wilson says:

The kids looked perfect in there, but they weren't learning a thing because the regular ed teacher had no idea how to modify the curriculum. They were sitting in the back of the room, looking like they were doing what they were supposed to and everybody thought they were, but come to find out, they had no idea. They just knew what they were supposed to look like.

Students had previously been identified as needing special educational support services because of their behavioral and/or academic struggles. When they were removed from those general education classrooms and placed in more restrictive special classrooms, the former classrooms, focused on order and rationality, continued uninterrupted (Kliewer, 1998). But when those distinctions between special and general classrooms became blurred, and eventually dissolved altogether, general education teachers' expectations for student engagement and demonstration of learning was called into question. The Kennedy students referred to above demonstrated

behavioral conformity to expectations as Paul states, “They just knew what they were supposed to look like.” Yet, the students still sat in the back of a classroom in which access to academics was limited. Sitting on the periphery of the classroom and not being fully engaged in academics would likely result in limited learning. In this case, rather than teachers questioning their own practice, they questioned the students; in particular, they questioned what students were really learning through their experiences in the general classroom. When students demonstrated limited learning, teachers used this as evidence to support their resistance to restructuring for the inclusion of all students. In other words, some students were still considered “too disabled” to benefit from placement in a general education classroom. Of course, what they fail to mention here is that pulling students out of general education classrooms and placing them in self-contained classrooms also results in limited learning.

Other stakeholders were more positive about the transition process. Reading Specialist, Linda Graham states,

Last year we did a little bit of push-in mainstreaming and those kids rose to it. They wanted to be there. You could just sense the pride, or whatever. Those children seem to have acclimated to changing classes better than those that didn’t have that experience. Another middle school special education teacher concurred, “Definitely any intervention you can do beforehand would always benefit the student...especially in middle school, because our students begin to see not only two teachers but six or seven teachers when they get into 7th grade.” So, having students spend time in general education classrooms, while being provided with modified instruction, would help ease the transition as would writing IEPs that reflect general education placements.

This section also suggests the need for increased parental involvement in this process. The next section focuses on data that were captured after the restructuring, when the two self-contained classrooms were closed and students were integrated into general education classrooms.

When Self-Contained Classrooms are Closed

Self-Contained as an Identity

“Self-contained” became a student identity in much the same way that the educational disability classification “ED” became an identity for DeMarcus. Teacher and administrator references to “self-contained kids” were ubiquitous, even in the absence of self-contained classrooms. Teachers made passing comments such as, “the special education students, whether they be self-contained, inclusion, or resource, are all mixed together in all three sections,” and, “I’ve been tracking a number of different self-contained students and so far so good.” Only one time a teacher caught herself saying, “Having so many self-contained kids coming up...I shouldn’t say ‘self-contained’ because they aren’t but I’d like to know more about the kids than what’s on their IEP so we can plan for these kids.” These quotes suggest that even when students were removed from special classes, they still could not shake the stigma of the “self-contained” identity. Many teachers and administrators seemed to believe that “self-contained” referred to students rather than to a placement. I use these examples not to suggest that teachers and administrators are bad people or bad teachers; I am simply suggesting that they seemed to use these descriptions of students without giving them much thought and that these designations stuck to the students even after the actual classrooms to which they referred were eliminated. This suggests to me that there is little awareness about the social construction of terms like “self-

contained” or “special education” and the unchecked meanings and assumptions working to maintain them.

Students from self-contained classrooms were also described as “needy,” “ED,” “MR,” and “IEP kids.” A “needy” student was one described as “being needy from his environment, from social things, and because he had been passed around from place to place without consistency.” For one such particularly “needy” African American student, fifth grade teacher, Jeannie Merrell concluded that having a label helped him because it was a “red flag” that something was going on with him. The majority of students in the former self-contained classrooms were black males, which is not surprising given the research on the disproportionate representation of black and brown bodies in special classrooms. The composition of students in the special classrooms at Kennedy School is consistent with national data that suggests that the students overrepresented in these settings are students who fall under the special education eligibility categories that have the most leeway for professionals to exercise their clinical judgments, emotional disturbance and mental retardation.

Students referred to as mentally retarded (or MR) were described by stakeholders as having limited academic skills and abilities. As we were talking about students labeled MR, Jeannie Merrell described a student in the following way, “The one that we have, he keeps changing too. He keeps stretching himself. There are days he amazes me and then there are days like, ‘Oh, yeah. Un-huh. They’ve got you pegged.’” This short statement reveals a lot about Jeannie and her assumptions. First, she says, “the one that we have” when referring to a student labeled as having MR. Rather than refer to him by name or refer to him as a student with the label of mental retardation, she objectifies the student—he becomes one (object) that they have. Second, Jeannie acknowledges, on the one hand, the benefit to inclusive education for this one

student because he “keeps changing” and “stretching himself.” When she says, “there are days he amazes me,” her unstated assumption is that she never expected him to change and stretch himself in these ways. On the other hand, the student remains “pegged,” by whom it is unclear, as mentally retarded. In other words, no matter how much the student changes and stretches himself, he will forever remain mentally retarded. Finally, even though Jeannie does not clarify to whom she refers when she says “they’ve got you pegged,” it is fairly clear that she does not consider the student as one of her own.

Jeannie contends, “our self-contained kids were so contained they need more help. The academic rigor is impossible to maintain.” DeMarcus, in addition to being described as “ED” was also described as “really MR” because he was reading on a kindergarten/first grade level. The following school year he would be transitioning into sixth grade and the teachers were concerned that, “He’ll never keep up.” DeMarcus and three other students were described as “non-readers” and “non-writers,” and in general, the other former self-contained students were described as being “really low,” particularly with reading and writing skills. With respect to students’ “low academic skills,” the principal, Angela, commented, “They all have speech problems. They don’t have the background to have speech skills.” These students were also described by one special educator as “the kinds of kids that can suck up every minute of every day.” Some of these students have already been identified by teachers as “kids who need a vocation.” In other words, due to their perceived low academic skills, these students are not constructed by stakeholders as students who will likely move on to postsecondary education. Students who “need a vocation” are students who would be recommended for vocational training programs rather than college prep programs.

At the very least, here, Jeannie and Angela fail to consider how context and stakeholders' perceptions shape how they "read" students' skills and abilities. Kliewer (1998) describes his epiphany in understanding how students with disabilities learn in "regular" classrooms. He recalls, "I was confronted by a most shocking realization: Context mattered. Physical context, intellectual context, spiritual context, instructional context, representational context—disability was shaped in the dimensions and attitudes surrounding the child's relationship to the wider world" (p. 14). Kennedy students did not inherently have "low skills," rather their demonstration of acquired knowledge and skills was more likely a result of having limited access to academics in the special classrooms and by teacher expectations that many of these students would always have "low skills." Jeannie, in particular, had difficulty reconceptualizing how her perceptions of students were mediated by her relationships with them. In Chapter 5, I describe how Jeannie's inability to see students with disabilities as her own influenced her campaign to remove a student from Kennedy school.

John McSweeney had a slightly more positive perspective when he predicted the academic futures for the former self-contained students:

I think in five years, they're gonna see the scores probably go up, the kids' behaviors level off really well. Those kids, the special ed kids will become more low learners on an average basis than they would be actually causing the detriment to the school. So, I think, academically that will get pushed forward.

While John seems to believe that the former self-contained students will continue to grow academically, at the same time he implies that right now these students are causing detriment to the school. If students are not valued exactly where they are, academically and socially, then stakeholders will be hard pressed to foster a sense of belonging for all students.

In speaking candidly about the struggles teachers were having with restructuring at the time of the interview, Jeannie Merrell said, “One of the struggles that we’re having now is, because we’re all inclusiveness, special ed goes away.” This quote speaks to Jeannie’s conflation of a self-contained placement with special education. Jeannie says that “special ed goes away,” yet special education at Kennedy School has not left the building; the school still has the same number of the special educators that it previously had. These teachers now co-plan with their grade level teams to make curricular modifications during planning times rather than on-the-spot in the classroom. The service of special education has changed in that students receive differentiated instruction provided by the special educator, a paraprofessional, the general education teacher, or a related service provider in the classroom. As long as the individualized instruction has been created/modified by the special education teacher, it can be administered by another adult, even if it is not necessarily the special educator.

Identifying who would provide differentiated instruction caused much confusion for Kennedy staff. They asked the university professors endless questions about whether or not they were in compliance when the special educator was not with the special education students all day long. Jeannie seemed to be saying that within this model, the special education *room* goes away (i.e., the self-contained room). In other words, the elimination of special classrooms is only a problem if you are struggling to include the students you have in your classroom. Traditionally speaking, when teachers struggled, they sent kids out of their classroom, but in the absence of a self-contained space to send them, teachers are left with fewer options to send students elsewhere.

Director of Special Education, David Phillips, argued for a different narrative about special education. He said, “We have to have open conversation. This is not a place or a program

but a service.” That same open conversation needs to happen in regard to students—that self-contained is not an identity attached to students, but rather a placement that no longer exists at Kennedy.

Different Kinds of Students Need Different Kinds of Treatment

Several Kennedy stakeholders seemed to make sense of students’ varying needs in terms of binaries: regular ed/special ed, writer/non-writer, reader/non-reader, which suggests a difference in kind rather than a difference in degree. Shildrick (1997) argues that binary opposites serve to support what seems like clear-cut boundaries and definitions, but “the latter marked term is always in some sense subordinate or inferior” in meaning (p. 105). Each category in the binary is already loaded with cultural meanings. Shildrick (1997) claims that the “categories themselves and the boundaries between them are discursively constructed so that they may be either identified or radically disjunct” (p. 107). Reflecting upon her learning since the transition, Jeannie Merrell stated, “John (the special education teacher) has taught me how to read the children. I can read the regular ed children but he taught me how to read the special ed children.” In other words, on the one hand, “reading the regular ed children” is something that either comes naturally to Jeannie or it is something she has developed over the years. The “special ed children,” on the other hand, are conceived as so different that she has to be *taught* by a special educator how to read them. It is unclear whether Jeannie is referring to interpreting students’ behavior, their learning, or both when she refers to “reading” them.

Jeannie also struggled with conceptualizing *all* students in her classroom as her own. She remarked how surprised she was when “one of my kids asked Mr. McSweeney if he (the student) can help some of his kids.” Then, there are other children, “some of [Mr. McSweeney’s] children will ask me for help instead of [him].” Jeannie seems to be stuck in the mindset that “these

special education students are his kids” and “these regular education students are my kids.” She still thinks very narrowly about to whom the students belong and for whom she expects them to ask for help. The element of Jeannie’s surprise suggests that she did not expect the students to cross those constructed boundaries, mine/yours, regular ed/special ed, and so on. Furthermore, Jeannie appears to be comparing two types of students: type A (regular education students) and type B (special education students) where each type is assumed to be distinct and separate. This type of conceptual separation leads to conceptual segregation whereby students may no longer be physically segregated, but they remain conceptually segregated, at least in Jeannie’s mind and in her classroom (Ferri & Connor, 2006).

One of the things Jeannie reports having to change this school year was the way she thinks about behavior. She says:

Some of the children, I know they have issues so I know I have to change the way I reprimand them or talk to them or change certain things that I would normally do with a regular ed child because I know that if I don’t, I’m gonna set him off and they’ll go flying.

She continues, “They have to be treated in a different way because of their disability. And I have to know this. I never had to know that before.” Perhaps if Jeannie focused more on knowing each child personally, and if she conceived of all students as her own, perhaps then she would have a clearer idea about how to support each child in the classroom.

Likewise, reading specialist Linda easily conceptualizes how to include a child like Samuel from *Including Samuel*, a white middle class child who has cerebral palsy, but she cannot conceptualize including a child with a cognitive disability, who is also “very emotionally disturbed from home life.” Even after re-structuring, Linda maintains:

We've got a couple [students] I still have major question marks about—when you have a truly ED child, it's different when you look at *Including Samuel* and you see that bright boy, with a fabulous home life, who has a physical disability but cognitively he's right there. That, to me, is so totally foreign to what we have here....Our children are victims of... some could be crack babies, some could be very emotionally disturbed from home life. They haven't had the opportunities. There's a whole lot more going on with our kids.

Without explaining what she sees in a “truly ED child,” Linda talks here about “crack babies,” students as “victims,” and students as “disturbed from home life,” without questioning the construction of these labels. Like many teachers who assume that students of color come from poor and dysfunctional families, Linda creates profiles of academic ability based on cultural narratives and deficit discourses about Black students, their families, and their communities (Collins, 2003). These constructs create a context in which Linda is not sure how this model is appropriate for all students. In other words, some kids are too disabled to be included, and she is not talking about students with significant physical disabilities, like Samuel (in *Including Samuel*) or a Kennedy School first grader who has cerebral palsy. She is talking about poor kids of color here. Once students are constructed as having “low ability,” it is easier to assign them to positions of marginality. Deficit based beliefs about students' abilities often persist even in the presence of counter examples that show the capabilities of students (Collins, 2003).

Linda further characterized the different kinds of students they have at Kennedy. In reference again to Samuel in *Including Samuel*, and Jamie Burke, who has autism, Linda stated:

Cognitively they are right there. They've got it going on, they just couldn't get it out. But what do you do when you've got an IQ that's borderline MR or MR, who has emotional issues on top of it all because of the anger, how do you include somebody like that?

First, Linda alludes to the cognitive ability of Samuel and Jamie and then refers to Kennedy's unnamed students who have IQs that are "borderline MR." Linda, like Jeannie, does not question her use of the mental retardation label. She also implies here that an IQ score is an indication of cognitive ability. Hayman (1998) argues that intelligence can only be defined in relation to context, "principally by the demands of the environment and the perspective of the observer" (p. 270). Intelligence is being constructed in this particular school culture, by a reading specialist, as something measurable on a standardized test and as a factor to consider in who should/should not be included. All the while, Linda never seems to question that Kennedy students, too, might know more than they can express or demonstrate. Second, she explains that Kennedy students have emotional issues added to the cognitive disability, which makes including them something she just cannot, "wrap her mind around." What she really seems to be saying here is that Kennedy students are not like Samuel or Jamie; they are not as smart and they have emotional issues. What she fails to consider here are the ways in which these students have been constructed via race, social class, and disability label and how these constructs filter the lenses through which stakeholders interact with and understand students.

Linda did not problematize her use of "MR" or "borderline MR," "anger issues," or how students have been disenfranchised. Without these complications to her thinking, she is left to believe that the disability must, therefore, reside within the student. In some ways, disability labels are still acceptable ways to "other" children and to exclude them. We would be hard-pressed to find teachers who say, "I don't want black kids in my classroom," but we regularly

find teachers who say, “I don’t want those needy (or angry or emotionally disturbed from their home life) students in my classroom.” If teachers continue to talk about students who are “needy” and other disability-related codes for race and social class, they can escape being linked directly to racism and classism. I asked Linda for clarification, if she was talking about kids who have both MR and ED, and Linda replied:

Yes. And, also the Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Cause we’ve got kids that are like that. Kids that just don’t do it because they’re not going to. So you’ve got all those things going on. It’s not just somebody that can’t produce because they physically can’t do it... it’s different. I don’t get that. I can’t get my head around it.

Linda is likely interpreting student resistance as disability-related.

There was talk during the planning meetings about the number of Kennedy students who are identified with special education labels. With 26 percent of students identified at Kennedy School, the director of special education remarked, “There is no way you can tell me that one in four students has a disability. No way.” He encouraged Kennedy staff to pay attention to their practices of referring students for special education evaluation. Jeannie Merrell, however, was not concerned about the labeling of students. When I asked her if there was any movement to de-classify students after seeing them in the general education classroom, she said:

I would never want to give up the label because they can use them in college. They can get extra resources. Labels need to follow [these kids] especially when they have to start switching rooms. So, I think that labels are very important and we are not over labeling.

What seemingly goes unquestioned here is that different labels carry different meanings and outcomes; a speech/language label is more benign than a mental retardation label. Many teachers do not think of students with mental retardation labels as college material. Additionally, the

outcomes of labels are partly dependent upon the social class of students. For example, a Learning Disability label is used most effectively by students and parents who come from privileged social classes; these families use the label to gain access to resources and accommodations. The same label, for families from underprivileged social classes, ends up closing doors for students (Brantlinger, 2001).

Another recurring theme that surprised me was stakeholders' focus and concern over medication. Interestingly enough, their talk never revolved around how the medication benefitted the student, rather their talk emphasized what happens when students were not on medication. During my interview with John McSweeney and Jeannie Merrell, John described that Jeannie likes order in the classroom, but, "...sometimes that's just not possible. Kids don't have medication. They don't have the things that they need and so you've really got to work with that child a little bit harder." So, when students are not on medication, and there is disorder in the classroom, the blame can be placed on the lack of medication and/or the parents who do not make sure the student has the medication, rather than on teachers and how they keep students engaged. I asked Jeannie about the students from the former self-contained class. She said:

We have one in our room. Knowing his history and everything else, he really needs to be in a self-contained room so the teacher can be on his case all the time. He has medication and unfortunately the parent is not very good with it, not very religious with it, and when she does give it to him, it's so early in the morning that by eleven, he's gone. And our day's just starting.

What kind of history suggests the need for a self-contained placement? What kind of disability suggests a teacher should be "on his case all the time?" Is difficulty with focusing here suggesting a necessary self-contained placement? Marquis, a student who figures more

prominently in Chapter Five, was described by his teachers as, “on his medication right now. When he runs out of medication, “he is off, which is not good.” John describes Marquis’s mother as “emotional” and “frustrated” but he does not qualify if the mother is emotional and frustrated due to Marquis’s struggles, due to her own emotional struggles, or due to something else. A fuller and more balanced description of her frustration was provided to me by the director of special education several months later (see Chapter 5).

It proved difficult for some teachers to conceptualize how students perceived as needing such different things, could still be taught alongside nondisabled peers in general education classrooms. One teacher articulated this struggle at a planning meeting, “I’m struggling with a student who’s learning style and level is so different from the other students, that to have him doing what he needs for his leaning, would mean he’s spending the day by himself.” On another occasion I had the chance to observe DeMarcus, an African-American boy described as ED and MR, in his classroom. When I arrived, the teacher was standing at the front of the room explaining to students how to use quotation marks, commas, ending punctuation, and capital letters. DeMarcus, with his pencil resting behind his ear, sat attentively while the teacher spoke. When she finished speaking, she told students that they could do the exercises in their workbooks. I walked around the room and eventually toward DeMarcus’s desk. I was surprised to find him working on a worksheet that was completely different from what the other students were doing. DeMarcus had a worksheet with pictures on one side and three- and four-letter words (e.g., “fill” and “cap”) on the other side. Just to make sure it was a completely different assignment he was working on, I looked to the student who was sitting directly behind DeMarcus and he was working quietly and conscientiously on an exercise asking students to insert quotation marks, commas, ending punctuation, and capital letters where needed. I recall thinking

to myself, “This would be simple to modify for DeMarcus,” and “Doesn’t he, too, need to know where to place quotation marks and capital letters?” I realized then that lowered expectations, too, had followed students like DeMarcus from the self-contained classroom to the general education classroom.

Even though the university professors conducted more than two workshops on differentiating instruction and provided examples such as the use of Multiple Intelligences Think-Tac-Toe, some differences between Lo-Prep and Hi-Prep Differentiation, and differentiated reading homework coupons, Reading specialist Linda Graham had difficulty grasping the idea of differentiated instruction without using ability groups for reading. She says:

In order to learn how to read, you have to differentiate instruction. You have to pull kids into little groups and work where they are and take them as far as they can go....In my experience, that’s how you gotta reach em.

Ability groups, however, were a bone of contention for many teachers who thought that pulling kids into groups based on ability went against the principles of the All Means All Project. The danger in using inflexible groupings is that there is a tendency for these groups to become cemented into segregated groups within the classroom.

When students are constructed as being so different that they need different things, it becomes difficult for teachers to conceptualize how they might be taught alongside one another in the same classroom. Even when self-contained classrooms were closed, behavior remained a concern for teachers and administrators.

Behavior. Behavior was a term used regularly at Kennedy School in connection to students though different meanings were attached to it at different times. The three most common explanations of behavior mentioned by stakeholders were withdrawal, disruptive

behavior, and “cultural things.” Withdrawal in school was described in one of two ways. First, for Marquis, the most challenging behavior for teachers to contend with was what to do with him when he pulls his sweatshirt up over his head because at that point “he shuts down and there is no communicating with him.” This “behavior” was later cited by administrators as an example of what “this model” was doing to Marquis. Note here that administrators did not reflect upon the lack of supports in the classroom for Marquis; instead, administrators believed that the all-inclusive model was the reason for Marquis’s disengagement. Marquis was described by one of his teachers, “he’s not a physical kid...he’s not gonna fight ya,” but he withdraws because “he knows that he is different in the fact that he doesn’t get it. The reading thing. And he’s embarrassed by it and he acts very inappropriate.” Second, a reading support teacher implied that some students withdraw by not doing their work. The teacher in charge of implementing Fast Forward, a reading intervention software program for students with below-average reading scores, told me that in order for students to make reading progress, “You have to want to do the work.” The implication here clearly is that there are some students who are choosing not to do the work,” another form of withdrawal or passive resistance.

Disruptive behavior ranged from descriptions of students in the self contained classrooms throwing chairs, cursing, students being defiant, and students being talkative. The director of special education talked about teachers being pressed to teach the standards to 24 kids when you have students who have come from environments where throwing chairs and cursing was typical behavior. Another teacher commented that if teachers had to be patient while a student with a disability made his way up to the board to complete a task, “things would fall apart behind you while you’re being patient waiting for the student to respond.” Another student, Marquis, demonstrated additional disruptive behavior, according to his teachers. Though he was described

by the general education teacher as having good comprehension skills, and being well liked by his peers, it was his “talking out, disrupting the other kids sitting near him” that was her major concern.

During one all-day differentiation workshop, a substitute teacher came to the door to notify two teachers (one general education and the other special education) that their student was being “defiant.” Both teachers went to see the student. When the general education teacher returned, she said, “He’s having a bad day. I think he’s out of medicine and I don’t think his mom filled his prescription. This has happened before, he runs out and then it’s weeks before he gets any more.” This student’s defiant behavior was constructed as a result of the student not having medication and the mother not having filled the medication. What seemingly goes unquestioned is the role of the substitute teacher, her skills in classroom management and differentiation, and the possible lack of consistency because this day was different from others. In other words, teaching practice and classroom environment go unquestioned; it is easier to jump to explaining this “defiant” behavior in terms of the student’s constructed disability and need for medication (Collins, 2003).

The “cultural things” also caused some problems in the classroom. Jeannie Merrell told me, “We have some kids in here who are very street wise; they bring a lot of street in here, and because of them, we have to bring back the Tribes.” John says the “cultural thing” often comes out in the way that the boys talk to one another. He said:

It’s just not appropriate. And it’s not gonna get them a job. And it’s not gonna get them talking to their boss or their manager. It’s not gonna get them a raise. It’s gonna start ticking some people off. And they’re gonna get pegged as that kind of person.

John hopes that the implementation of the All Means All Project means that they can begin to address some of these cultural things to turn some of the abilities kids have into being leaders in their communities. Jeannie shared her perception of the reality for her students:

I'm hoping that society changes because they've been really pushed about drugs, stuff like that. We don't have as many people who are giving birth to these crack babies and a lot of our children are due to that and that's why they are where they are.

A "horrible day" for Jeannie is when "one kid goes off and then it sets another kid off and it just kind of makes its way around the classroom." One day a child brought a stink bomb to the classroom and someone stepped on it. Jeannie caught some students trying to blame it on the student with a disability. She said, "That was such an ugly day. We had to stop. We had to talk about Tribes. We had to talk about how we worked together. It was an ugly day." The development and use of Tribes is not meant to be a punishment. Tribes aims to promote smaller learning communities within classrooms where students grow to feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers through fostering mutual respect for students of different abilities, cultures, genders, etc. On another occasion when I was observing in the classroom, I heard Jeannie threaten students with Tribes if they did not change their behavior. Folding her arms across her chest, she said, "I don't know. The way things are going, we might have to do some Tribes stuff today." Several students groaned in response. One boy said, "I hate Tribes," and another added, "I don't wanna be the same family as you." My sense is that Jeannie thinks, and has conveyed her thinking to students, that Tribes and community building are wastes of valuable teaching time. Her self-described, "fast-paced teaching," is focused heavily on academics and very little, if any, on community building. As far as Jeannie's and John's classroom is concerned, there is still much work to be done in building supportive, collaborative, classroom communities.

Carrington and Robinson (2006) argue for creating school communities in which students are actively involved in building connections with other students through trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that foster a sense of belonging. They argue, “When students are invited to be ‘co-constructors and co-creators’ rather than passive consumers, students’ perspectives, cultures and experiences come into the centre of the curriculum” (p. 328). The converse is also true—when teachers use more traditional methods of power and control to dominate classroom culture, it serves to undermine the development of a sense of trust, tolerance, and belonging essential for the academic and social success of all students.

“They’re just not cut out for this.” Jeannie hoped that at the end of the school year, administrators would listen to teachers’ recommendations for students on their IEPs because “some children, they’re just not cut out for this.” Her explanation was that there was too much noise, too many bodies, and too much movement for some students to adjust to in general education classrooms. In other words, Jeannie conceptualizes these classrooms as spaces that cannot be modified to fit the needs of the students; either the students adjust to this setting as it is, or they face potential removal to a more quiet setting with fewer bodies. Chapter Five explores these contentious recommendations in more depth.

Seventh grade special education teacher, Mike Correa, said that he, too, does not think that the model necessarily fits with one of his student’s needs. Without describing the student’s academic needs, Mike explained that the student was not showing up for class and avoiding school altogether. He reasoned that there were too many changes required of students in the departmentalization model and that some students will not be able to handle the amount of change when they have been in special classes for most of their educational years. He continues,

“You can try to intervene at this point and try and pull them along, but it’s a little late in the game for that now.” Mike’s statement implies that for some seventh graders, it is too late to intervene. When a student is “written off” in seventh grade, what does that mean for the remaining five years of schooling ahead of him?

Reschly and Christenson (2006) argue that students with learning disabilities and emotional or behavior disorders have the highest dropout rates among students receiving special education services. Even though most people tend to think of dropout as a short-term event, Reschly and Christenson (2006) argue that it can best be viewed as “a gradual process of withdrawal from school” (p. 278). When students are not engaged in school, when they do not participate in classroom and/or extracurricular activities that focus on social and emotional bonding or identification with the school, students begin to feel a sense of alienation rather than a sense of belonging. Student absences and tardiness should serve as warning signs for schools to assess the barometer of belonging. Both teachers, Jeannie and Mike, place the onus of a placement mismatch on the individual students themselves—that they are not “cut out for” inclusive classroom placements. This argument relieves teachers from having to think critically about their assumptions and their practices.

Given his sort-out-difference framework, it is likely that the former self-contained student Mike Correa mentioned may never feel engaged in classroom and school activities that foster a sense of connectedness and investment in schooling. The special classrooms at Kennedy School were physically and socially disconnected from the rest of the school. With lowered academic expectations and the stigmatized clinical construction of students in self-contained classrooms, it is likely that this student’s alienation from school began years before restructuring occurred. Then, when the special classrooms were closed and students were expected to engage in

classroom activities with higher expectations, it is not surprising that some students might choose to opt out. The key for Kennedy School as they move forward will be to identify students who are at risk of dropping out early enough that they can take a more personalized approach to re-engaging students in school activities that foster students' acceptance and value.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the ways in which stakeholders talked about and treated students who were placed in special classrooms. This talk is important to consider because it reveals the ways in which people think about students. When students were in self-contained classrooms, they were largely made invisible through school and district policies and because they were physically isolated from other classrooms. In addition to being constructed as “low learners,” these students were also described as aggressive and emotionally-damaged from their home and cultural environments. Some of these students were perceived as being too disabled to be transitioned into general education classrooms.

During the second year of the project, after the special classrooms had been closed, many students were still referred to as “self-contained kids.” “Self-contained” ceased being used to describe an educational placement and instead became an identity that followed students into general education classrooms. This suggests that just because student placement changes, the socially constructed stigmatized identity as “other” does not necessarily change. Students were still constructed as being so different that they needed different things. Some stakeholders came to the conclusion that some students do not fit this educational model. The social construction of students in this chapter sets the stage for Chapter 5, when a group of Kennedy stakeholders became invested in using the practice of inclusion to justify student exclusion.

CHAPTER 5

“They will end up where they belong”: When the vision wanes

Because of the complexity of educational systems, a collectively created and shared vision statement is important in guiding stakeholders through the arduous work of whole school inclusive reform. This is particularly true when dominant cultural narratives and schooling practices are actively challenged in the course of restructuring. This chapter begins by describing some stakeholders’ early skepticism of the reform process. It, then, highlights important turning points resulting in the eventual creation of a shared mission statement. Months after its creation, however, the mission became obscured for some stakeholders and the consequences for one student in particular were damaging. This chapter highlights the potential for stakeholders to return to more comfortable and traditional schooling practices when confronted with difficult reform and a mismatch between the mission and reality.

Skepticism From the Beginning

There were, right from the beginning, teachers who did not support restructuring and administrators who were skeptical. I entered the research setting in September and Kennedy staff had already voted the previous spring to move forward with restructuring. Angela Kline was named the new principal of Kennedy School sometime after that vote, so her entry into this particular reform philosophy and practice came shortly before my own.

Angela openly shared her skepticism, asking university professors on more than one occasion at the public monthly planning meetings, “Do you believe all kids can be included?” and, “If we make this a go, [the special education director] will do all he can to support us.” On one such occasion Angela stated, “We can see if it works. If it doesn’t, we can always go back to

the old way of doing things. It's not cast in stone." A general education teacher responded by saying, "We need change. Rather than say, 'Oh, we tried it and it didn't work,' we have to tweak it so that it does work rather than just give up on it." Angela's public skepticism slowed the process in the beginning.

To complicate matters, some school staff began resisting early restructuring efforts. Angela says of that time period, "When I got here, the staff felt that it's really something that they did not want. The things that they were being told about All Means All, they didn't know previously. And there was really a push-back by the staff." Though I never heard this resistance expressed publically at the planning meetings, administrators recall this sentiment with clarity. Delores Burns remembers:

The way it was sold to us...they [university professors] came in and said, 'We're not gonna do anything different. This is the plate. We're not adding to your already full plate.' They were selling it as if we weren't gonna have to do anything different. 'It's just gonna give you a different model to keep doing what you're doing.' Well, no, you had to change a lot of things that you were doing, and then they (the staff) felt they didn't want to do it because they'd been sold it falsely.

In reality, Delores felt that there were many things they had to learn to do differently and she wished the university professors had been more forth-coming about those things in the beginning. Although there had been a 95 percent vote to move forward by the staff, little had been accomplished for months after the vote. Paul Wilson recalls:

We met once a month with [the university professors] for the first four or five months. We set our goals but there was really nothing that seemed to be getting accomplished. There were some people who were very excited about it, there were some people who

looked...wanted to look like they were excited but really were afraid, and then there were some people who just didn't want it to happen.

Initial restructuring discussions resulted in limited progress. Angela thinks that staff resistance was minimized only when she herself empathized with the staff, telling them, 'Let's see how we're gonna make this work.' Only then, she believes, staff began to buy-into the reform efforts. First, though, Angela needed her own conversion, of sorts.

Turning Points

An important turning point for Kennedy School occurred when seven staff members from Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, a K-6 building in the same school district, came to Kennedy to discuss their experiences implementing a very similar reform agenda. Wilson School began working with the same two university professors at the same time, yet Wilson was slightly ahead of Kennedy School in terms of re-structuring. Wilson teachers voted to implement the All Means All Project at the same time as Kennedy, Spring 2007, with full implementation planned for September 2008. But, by the end of May 2007, when teams were re-drawing their classroom maps for the following school year, some teams decided to go ahead and try to integrate students into general education classrooms in September 2007. As a result of different grade level teams implementing different practices during the 2007-08 school year, Wilson School still utilized one of their special classes for students with disabilities though they had unofficially closed the other. So on January 9, 2008, Woodrow Wilson staff members shared their experiences and their insights with Kennedy staff, based on their restructuring efforts over the previous four months.

One Woodrow Wilson teacher explained the importance of the on-going process of re-envisioning their roles and responsibilities as teachers:

You have to see yourself as an educator. I'm a teacher. Not a special ed teacher. 'These are my kids.' 'These are so-and-so's kids.' If you can step out of that, which is hard to do, and say, 'I teach all kids,' it is much better. That, we are still working on. It's one component that still stirs conversation.

Most special education and general education teachers have been trained separately in their academic programs, meaning that they are taught to think of certain students as "their own students" while *other* students belong to *other* teachers. Many of these teachers then moved into separate educational classrooms, programs, and bureaucracies where they taught "special ed students" or "regular ed students" respectively. Special education teachers are often constructed as having more patience than general education teachers for their abilities to teach students with disabilities. One teacher jokingly commented on her changing identity, "When you become just a teacher, you lose your special ed angel wings."

Within these constructed, separate structures, rarely is the general educator responsible for teaching or supporting "special ed students" and even less common is the special educator expected to teach or support "regular ed students." Re-constructing yourself as a teacher of *all* students is a learning process; this change in identity will not happen instantaneously. Because so many teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach students for whom they have not been trained, Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, and Spagna (2004) argue that, "To facilitate confidence and competence, teachers need systematic and intensive training that includes research-based best practices in inclusive schools. Moreover, critical to sustained change is staff development that is ongoing and participatory" (p. 105). The first step, according to Wilson staff members, is to think of all students as your own.

Angela Kline asked Woodrow Wilson's staff about the "sentiment and feeling" in the building when they began because at Kennedy she said, "We seem to have lost some gusto. There are fewer and fewer people attending the meetings." A former special classroom teacher from Wilson responded, "There's been backlash by some...feeling that this is forced on them, but the biggest difference for us was when we put the model down on paper." Another teacher added, "It's still very bumpy. People get frustrated, unhappy, they pull back..." Angela interrupted to ask, "And you didn't bring any of them with you today?" That was when a general education teacher spoke up, "I was one of those teachers. I cried the whole first month of school. I cried so hard. I realized it was not about me and the way I feel. It's about what's best for kids...I kept telling myself that."

The reading specialist from Woodrow Wilson also shared her ideas, "You have to decide what you want [the project] to be as a building. It will never look the same two years in a row because kids change." A special education teacher explained the importance of emphasizing this reform as a process, "It has to be a flexible and fluid model in order to reach all kids." Another general education teacher shared, "We put our heads together and figured it out. There's lots of communication that goes into this. And going into this with a positive attitude." The same teacher who stated she cried the whole first month of school (above) added, "The bottom line is that we are here for the kids and what's best for the kids." This mantra became important in guiding stakeholders through difficult times. Commitment was another theme articulated clearly by different teachers. One teacher summarized, "If we say we're going to focus on every kid, then we have to focus on every kid. If you're gonna do [the All Means All Project], do it with both feet."

Kennedy staff members heard Wilson staff members articulate that even four months into the reform, this work is still difficult and that it was not supported by all staff members in the beginning. Both points were important for Angela to hear. They also articulated the importance of approaching this reform as a process, where stakeholders collaborate to decide what they want the restructuring to look like, and continuous communication with one another. Commitment, maintaining positive attitudes, and focusing on the students were the parting messages Woodrow Wilson staff left with Kennedy staff.

There was an additional turning point, hereinafter referred to as, “the wind-chill day.” Wind-chill days in the northeastern part of the US typically mean that blowing wind plus cold temperatures result in temperatures that feel sub-zero. Kennedy School is part of an urban school district that has nearly 4,000 students who walk to school, therefore when the wind chill temperatures approach 20 degrees below zero, the superintendent closes schools for the day. Teachers and staff often still have to report to work, even when students do not report, and this was the case on one blustery day at the end of January 2008. Angela Kline gave her staff the task of meeting with their grade level teams to come up with a plan for restructuring. “The wind-chill day” was later acknowledged by several stakeholders as being significant because it was the first day that they actually put a plan on paper, making the reform feel more real to stakeholders.

At the next month’s planning meeting, grade level teams presented their written plans to the larger group. The combination of having plans originating from the staff, put on poster board and shared publicly, seems to have been another important turning point for Principal, Angela Kline. At the end of the planning meeting, everyone went around the room and said “in-a-word” how they were feeling right then. Angela could not quite contain her feeling in-a-word:

I don't know...there's so much that has gone into this. At one point, we all looked at each other and said, 'This is not going to work.' We were fearful. The more we look at it and tweak it, the more hopeful we have become. We're all worried and we're all concerned. It's been an exciting ride. I'm surprised we've made it this far. If it works, it's the best thing for our kids.

Angela commonly used what linguists refer to as qualifiers, groups of words that limit or modify the meaning of other words. "If it works" is coded meaning that she really is skeptical that this reform will work. Just weeks later, during the April whole-school staff meeting, Delores informed the group, "We are going with it full force, the entire building as of September." When someone asked, "Are we ready to do this," Angela responded:

We know that the first year will be the most difficult. I know that it's mind-boggling. We'll have to tweak it as it goes because this is the paper plan. We need to say, 'Okay, let's try it.' We've got to start moving classrooms this summer. We have two staff development days. We have to be proactive, putting these pieces together before June. Then I think we'll be happier come September.

Angela exerted more leadership here than she had over the previous eight months. "Okay, let's try it," is a different focus and narrative from, "If we make this a go," though in the quote below, she is still skeptical that this reform will "work":

We are very excited about it. It's brand new. Change is threatening. We know it's best for kids. It will change the achievement levels of kids—kids of poverty and kids with special needs, if it works. We're going in with open minds.

Angela continued by addressing some of the stakeholders' concerns more directly:

I know not everyone is happy about this. That you're not sure. That you're really afraid.

There's a handful of you. We'd like to help ease your anxiety. If you would rather be at a building doing a more traditional thing, we'll support that.

Angela acknowledges that the new structure requires changes in teachers' identities, roles, and responsibilities, and that it may not work for all staff members. Above, Angela offers to support intra-district transfers for those staff members who are looking for a more traditional teaching option. It is only possible for Angela to make this a viable option because the majority of the district's schools still follow a traditional model where special education and general education are separate structures. If, by design, all of the district's schools restructured to close special classrooms, then the fear-filled teachers Angela refers to above, would simply have to adjust.

Angela later recalled what she told staff during this critical turning point, "The train's pulling out of the station. There's no way we're gonna stop. We gotta jump on." Paul Wilson added, "And some people jumped off." Approximately ten staff members put in for intra-district transfers or early retirement and left Kennedy School. For the teachers who remained at Kennedy School, there was a monthly, open-invitation option for them to more actively engage in restructuring and to build the confidence and competence necessary for teaching all students.

Monthly Planning Meetings

Monthly planning meetings began in September 2007 (when the vision statement was discussed) and continued through April 2008 (when a greater number of teachers turned out because they were "nervous," "curious," and "optimistic" about the impending restructuring). The meetings were held at Kennedy school, beginning immediately after school and ending promptly at 4:15 p.m. The number of individuals who attended fluctuated throughout the year

between 9 and 25. With a total staff of 117, this meant that between nine and 21 percent of staff members attended the planning meetings.

McKinley University professors facilitated each of the meetings. They typically arrived at Kennedy with a typed and photocopied tentative meeting agenda, which included a welcome, the designation of roles (e.g., time keeper, recorder), an assessment of where Kennedy School was with restructuring, and suggestions for next steps in the process. The meetings always ended with a closing activity. The professors' guiding roles in this process were important. Because there are no blueprints for reform of this magnitude, and because this is a difficult process that sometimes entails living with uncertainty, Fullan and Miles (1992) have suggested that external facilitators can help guide the journey. Others (Ryndak, Reardon, Benner, & Ward, 2007) have referred to such facilitators as "external critical friends." They describe this role as follows:

Critical friends do not indict a school or district; rather, they help schools and districts reflect on their current practices, make essential decisions related to their change efforts, and keep key stakeholders focused on the completion and effectiveness of their change efforts.

Whether they are referred to as "external facilitators" or "external critical friends," McKinley University professors played key roles in guiding Kennedy stakeholders through creating and implementing a shared vision for their journey.

The first planning meeting in September 2007 consisted of stakeholders drafting a shared vision statement. The following month, the statement was revised to the following:

Kennedy School All Means All Project Goals

Structure Goals (How we arrange adults and students):

- Students will be placed in balanced classrooms with positive role models.

- Designated person will facilitate efficient monthly communication meetings for staff to discuss various topics surrounding inclusion.

Climate Goals:

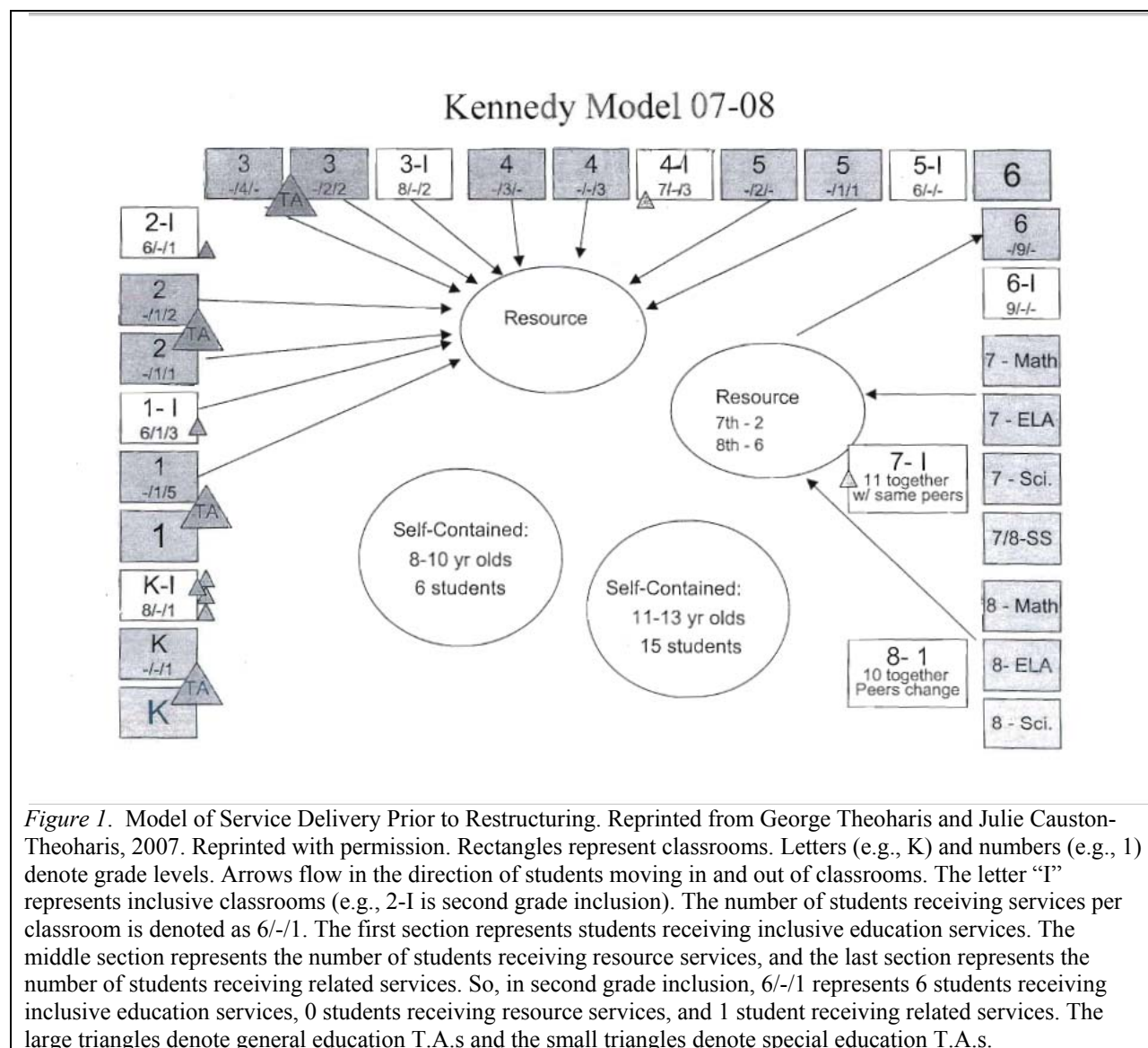
- Examine the physical structure to determine locations conducive to planning, supporting, and implementing inclusion at each grade level.
- Create a schedule that promotes consistent and common planning time for ongoing communication and dialogue.
- Develop and implement approaches and procedures, which promote a professional learning community (collaboration, consensus, agree to disagree respectfully).
- Purposefully build classroom and school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff and fosters active/engaging learning.

Meeting the needs of all in the General Education Classroom Goals:

- To have planned opportunities for vertical communication to provide continuity between grade levels.
- To provide child-centered, differentiated, research-based instruction that challenges children of all abilities, supported by targeted staff development.

The university professors proposed that a collectively-created vision statement can serve as a goal against which school stakeholders can measure their reform efforts. Stakeholders attending the All Means All planning meetings were encouraged to re-think their practices and to engage in collective problem-solving. As colleagues worked together in these meetings, they also nurtured their growth as professionals, building the kind of trust and collective knowledge necessary for effective collaboration. In addition to discussing their ideas and practices, the meetings also became a platform from which they could voice their fears and concerns.

After creating and revising a shared vision statement, the group then drew a map assessing their current structure in response to two simple questions put forth by the university professors: 1) Where are the students? And, 2) Where are the teachers? (See Figure 1: Model of Service Delivery Prior to Restructuring). This model shows that there were two self-contained classrooms, which comprised 21 students total. There were 28 general education classrooms that

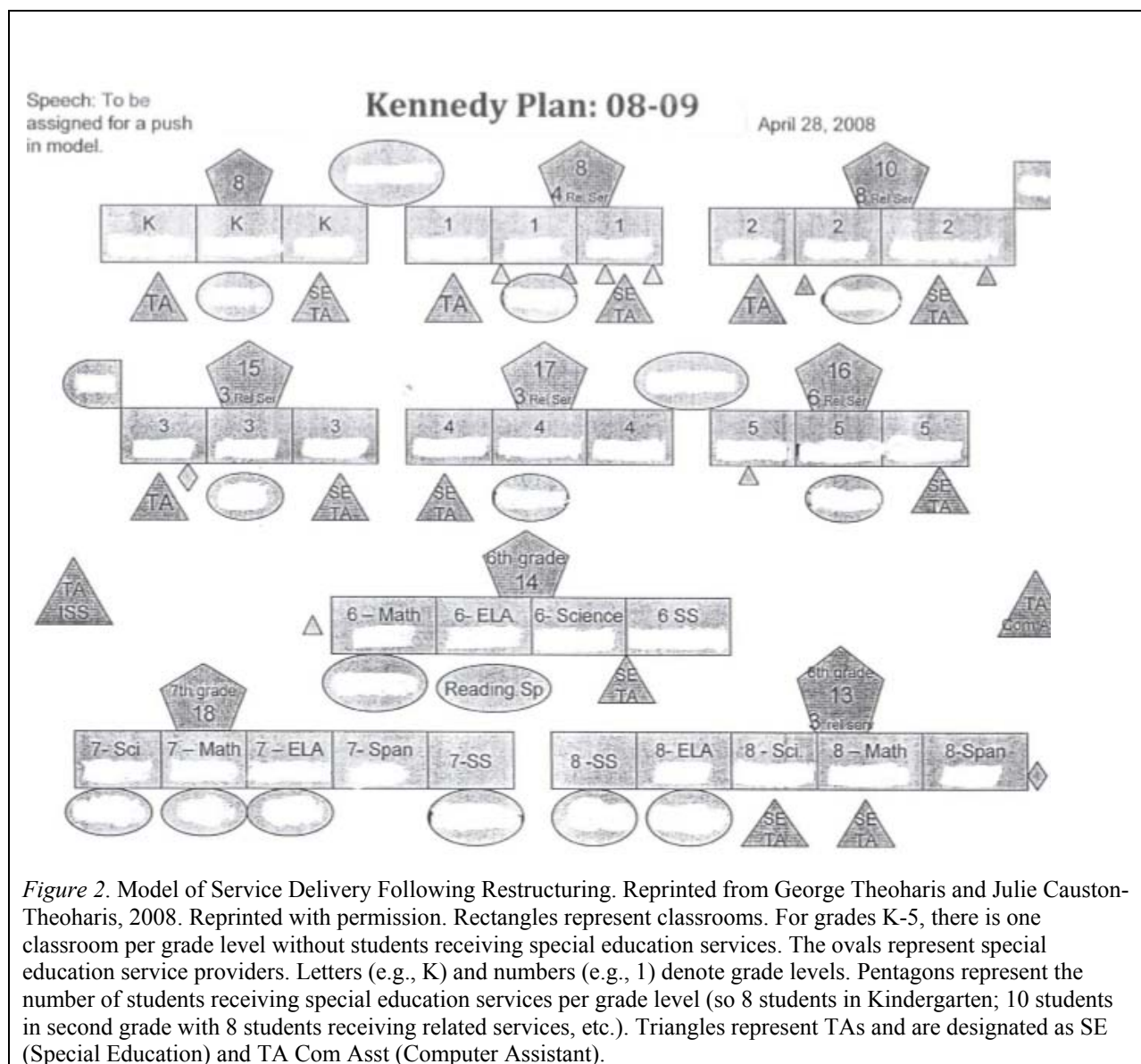


covered kindergarten through eighth grade. Of those 28 classrooms, seven of them were inclusive classrooms (one for each grade level, K-6), meaning that they comprised some students who qualified for special education services. There were 11 seventh grade and 10 eighth grade students with disabilities who stayed together throughout the day, switching classes according to the school's departmentalization model. The special education teachers followed those students from class to class in order to provide services for them. Some students with disabilities were pulled out of classrooms to attend two different resource classrooms, one class for students in

grades 1-5 and the other class for students in grades 7 and 8. The special education resource teacher “pushed into” the 6th grade class to provide support to students. The two self-contained classrooms each had a special education teacher. The resource classrooms likewise had special education teachers. The remainder of the special education teachers covered the inclusive classrooms.

The next step put forth by the university professors was to answer the third, and most difficult, question: 3) How can students be re-distributed first, and then teachers, so that all students are educated in general education classrooms? As stated above, the “wind-chill day” was significant because it was the first time that grade-level teams met together and put their ideas on paper regarding what restructuring might look like. During the following month’s planning meeting, these grade-level teams presented those plans. The months that followed included the drawing and re-drawing of models until administrators finally settled on a model that was distributed on paper to the whole staff (See Figure 2: Model of Service Delivery Following Restructuring).

The most striking difference in the second model is that there are no longer any self-contained classrooms or resource classrooms. When Kennedy staff eliminated those classrooms, they redistributed the students first (between two of three classrooms for each grade level) and then the teachers so that there was a special education provider assigned to each grade level (for grades K-5). There was also a special education teacher’s assistant (T.A.) assigned to each grade level. So, for example, when the special education teacher supported students in one first grade classroom during the morning, the special education T.A. was supporting students in the other first grade classroom. In the afternoon, the special education teacher and T.A switched places. For sixth grade, there were two special education providers assigned, one for Math and one for



ELA. There was an additional special education T.A. who split her time between the sixth grade Science and Social Studies classrooms. Seventh grade utilized four special education teachers, one each for Science, Math, ELA, and Social Studies. For eighth grade, there were two special education teachers, one for Social Studies and one for ELA and two special education T.A.s, one each assigned to support students in Science and Math. Prior to restructuring, the special education teachers in grades seventh and eighth followed the students with disabilities from class

to class. Following restructuring, special education teachers spend the entire school day in one classroom co-teaching with the content teacher. This latter arrangement allowed the teachers to build stronger co-teaching relationships and practices and it allowed the special education teachers to become more familiar with the content (e.g., Math) because they spent all day in the same classroom.

The evolution of the restructuring model engendered much discussion and the planning meetings became important venues for stakeholders to ask questions (e.g., *Are we in compliance if the special ed teacher is not in the classroom with 15:1 students all day? What does 12:1:1 and 15:1 really mean?*), to voice their concerns and fears (e.g., *What is my new role going to be? In which classroom do I put my desk?*), and to share a few laughs along the way. As important as these meetings were for restructuring, one significant challenge remained—because attendance at the after-school meetings was optional, only 9-21 percent of stakeholders attended. Attendance was never mandated and there were no extrinsic incentives to attend. This meant that 79-91 percent of stakeholders did not engage in discussing their practices, concerns, or fears with others in this venue and, perhaps more importantly, they missed professional development opportunities as a result of their absence.

For the remainder of the 2007-08 school year, University professors taught this small team of educators and administrators about the collaboration that is necessary for effective shared team planning and practices of co-teaching teams. Stakeholders engaged in problem-solving strategies with the facilitation of the university professors. For one day in May and one day in June 2008, one of the university professors facilitated an after-school workshop on differentiated instruction. These workshops took the place of the monthly planning meetings. That was the extent of the professional development for that school year. School came to a close

in June, and teachers went their different directions for the summer, while administrators worked hard to put together a schedule so that each team would have unencumbered planning time together each day.

With the arrival of Fall 2008, students and teachers returned to school and the university professors made available to Kennedy staff a graduate level university course entitled, “Collaboration in Schools.” Because it was a university course, there were also university graduate students who attended the class with Kennedy staff members. University professors tried to make attendance as easy for teachers as possible by arranging to hold the course after school, first at Kennedy, and then at a nearby high school library when the enrollment numbers grew too large for Kennedy School to accommodate. The collaboration course had a good turnout of Kennedy staff. Roughly 32 staff members attended the semester-long course held once per week for three hours.

Stakeholders began the course by examining their understandings of the differences between “inclusive education” and “not inclusive education.” Students in the course were asked to reflect upon their own experiences with belonging and to identify the consequences for their learning when they felt connected and disconnected. They learned what collaboration in the classroom looks like and about the importance of team building as an on-going process. The importance of effective communication was also highlighted. They addressed planning meetings and how to best utilize that time by assigning roles to team members and by sticking to the meeting agenda items. Co-teaching methods were presented and teachers were encouraged to assess their level of co-teaching each day for one week. One class was devoted to collaborating with paraprofessionals in the classroom. Suffice it to say, the individuals who attended the collaboration course learned a great many new skills.

At the same time, this was a university-level course. This meant that the university professor arrived to class each week with an agenda. She had a wealth of material to cover in a limited number of weeks. This was a different venue than the monthly planning meetings held previously. The university professors discussed at their weekly planning meetings at the university that they needed to schedule monthly meetings with Kennedy staff to assess how things are going with restructuring. Several emails were sent to assistant principal, Paul Wilson, to schedule these meetings but he did not respond. Kennedy school administrators did not attend the collaboration class. For all intents and purposes, the weekly collaboration class subsumed the place of the monthly planning meetings.

I do not know if teachers realized it immediately (or not) that this class was not going to replace the monthly planning meetings. It was only after a few months that frustrations began to surface. In addition to attending the weekly collaboration class, I was also conducting interviews during this time. Teachers were in the midst of restructuring, in the midst of negotiating new identities, roles, and responsibilities and yet there was no outlet for their frustration. The collaboration class did not replace the open-forum monthly planning meetings where stakeholders freely asked questions and voiced their concerns/fears.

There was no re-visiting or discussing the mission statement during this time, at least not in any public forum. Educational researchers, Thousand and Villa (2005), highlight the importance of regularly re-examining the vision or mission statement during restructuring in order to recognize when there is a “vision to reality mismatch” (p. 92). In their study of the O’Farrell School restructuring, Thousand and Villa (2005) found that the first five years were characterized by “a gradual separation of students with more significant disabilities” even though this was inconsistent with the school’s vision (p. 91). Because dominant school practices of

segregating students are so tenacious, schools in the midst of restructuring need to re-examine their vision statements often. At Kennedy School, this revisiting did not happen, at least not publicly. Though the university professors emailed the assistant principal several times to set up meetings, the meetings never happened. I believe that the administrators thought the weekly collaboration class subsumed the role of the planning meetings. However, the collaboration class proved not to be a place to re-examine the vision because it was a university course, which included non-Kennedy School staff. The university course was also not the venue for shared reflection and information that was specific to Kennedy School. Once the collaboration class ended in December, the university professors were successful in scheduling the remainder monthly planning meetings, one each in January, February, March, and May.

The principal eventually moved from her position of skepticism to one of support. In an interview at the end of the first year of implementation, she stated, “The teachers all know that we are here for kids. And that the [All Means All Project] is not going to go away and I think we keep seeing positive things happening for kids; they’re feeling better about themselves too.” Not all administrators and teachers, however, had such positive experiences with restructuring. The next section of this chapter focuses on a series of events that highlight the ways in which some stakeholders talked about students who “don’t seem to fit this model.” As teachers’ practices were challenged and the vision of reform began to wane, these examples highlight the potential for stakeholders to backslide during difficult restructuring times.

Backsliding

A veteran teacher, Jeannie Merrell, was one of many teachers who went from teaching by herself in a traditional general education classroom, to co-teaching with one of the former special class teachers at Kennedy, John McSweeney. Their jobs were challenging because the cohort of

fifth grade students with disabilities at Kennedy is 27 students, greater in number than any of the other grade levels. The number of students identified with educational disability labels in Jeannie's and John's classroom was eight. The principal once described this group of students at a monthly planning meeting, "Some of these kids are so needy. Where do you draw the line? And there are eight in [Jeannie's and John's] classroom. Eight heavy hitters this year." When students are described as "heavy hitters," their behavior is, once again, constructed as who the students are rather than as a challenge (or disability) they may have. Furthermore, when stakeholders construct students in this way, they fail to consider the ways in which the classroom environment influences the expression of such behaviors. Once again, this absolves the teachers of taking responsibility for the success of these students.

In the March 2009 monthly planning meeting, after almost one year of restructured classrooms, Jeannie stated, in an open monthly planning meeting:

We are definitely seeing kids who can succeed, ones we thought wouldn't. They are succeeding and we want to see them keep going. We're also seeing kids who can't. This really separates those that can move on and those that can't. We need to separate the kids who can go on to higher academics and those that need a different placement. The distinction is very clear now. Before it was always hazy but now we can definitely see the kids that need to go to community based classrooms.

When pushed for an explanation, Jeannie explained to the group that three fifth grade students need a change of programming because they are so different from the general education students that they need separate, community-based classroom placements rather than access to academic curriculum taught in general education classrooms. Jeannie's assumption here is that these students will get what they need, and that they will only be successful, in separate classrooms.

She also seems to misunderstand the goals of the All Means All Project. The project is not intended to divide those who can successfully participate in the general education classrooms from those who cannot. The goal of the project is to make sure all students feel that they are valuable classroom members and, given specially designed instruction and accommodations, that they can be successful in the classroom. Jeannie is asking the wrong question; instead of asking, “Do these students belong in this classroom?” she should be asking, “How can I make sure all kids are successful in this classroom?”

The March 2009 planning meeting ended and two months passed before the group met again. Some of the Annual Review and Committee for Special Education (CSE) meetings for students with disabilities were completed. In the May 2009 planning meeting, assistant principal, Paul Wilson, explained to the group:

In the special ed regulations and powers that be, we are supposed to be providing a service delivery model in our building that meets the needs of the kids. There are a couple of exceptions that we need to look at really hard, but they will not let us say, ‘This student’s needs are not being met by our service delivery model.’ We have to change the delivery model if it’s not meeting kids’ needs.

The district administrators made their positions clear during the Annual Review and CSE meetings— that the All Means All Project is about supporting all students in general education classrooms, not about deciding which students fit your particular model. Even after the district’s position was clearly articulated, Paul still believed that there were “a couple of exceptions” that warranted further discussion. The problem here was that even though there was unwavering support at the district level, there were soft commitments by the principal and assistant principal at the school level.

Jeannie, once again, voiced her concern for the students with emotional and anxiety issues in her and John's classroom. She described some of them as having emotional difficulties "because the students don't feel successful in the classroom with the regular ed kids." Jeannie also expressed her concern about the movement that students have to make between classes when they move up to 6th grade, which follows a departmentalization model. Students in this model are required to change classes each period and to keep their personal belongings in hallway lockers. When challenged by one of the university professors who said that there will always be a handful of students who are challenging, Jeannie stated, "I'm just saying that it's going to be frustrating for these kids and for the staff next year. I see the writing on the wall. They will end up where they belong." Another teacher asked, "Which is where?" The principal replied, "Self-contained." Jeannie then elaborated, "In a more inclusive self-contained classroom. They were successful with us because it was one classroom, one structure, one set of expectations. They won't make it next year with all the transitions. I've been up there. I know."

There are several interesting contradictions in Jeannie's comments. First, she is concerned that students are having "emotional and anxiety issues" in her classroom because students do not feel successful in the classroom. At the same time, she said the students "were successful with us because it was one classroom, one structure, one set of expectations." Were students successful or not? Furthermore, Jeannie fails to articulate what she considers "success." She also fails to reflect on her own practice in relation to student's success. She fails to ask the question, "What shall I and my co-teacher do to provide the supports that will ensure these students' success?" In not reflecting upon her own practice, she can more easily avoid responsibility for whether or not students experience success and a sense of belonging in her classroom. The problem of students not experiencing success, therefore, is constructed as

residing within the individual student, not within Jeannie's practice. Jeannie likely was engaging in what Kathleen Collins (2003) describes as "impression management" to construct self-protective images of herself. When teachers explain a student's failure as a result of the student's disability and or service delivery model, they absolve themselves of responsibility for that student's failure. Impression management becomes a way for teachers to "save face."

Second, after Jeannie explains that students do not feel success in her classroom, she moves on to casting her concerns about these students transitioning to 6th grade, when they have to change classrooms several times each day. Jeannie cannot conceive of these students doing well when they have more than one classroom, more than one structure, and more than one set of expectations. Rather than cast her concerns as optimistic problem-solving opportunities (Kress & Elias, 2006), Jeannie backslides into a more familiar organizational structure, one that provides separate educational experiences for students constructed as too disabled to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers. Her statements also express a framework for low expectations for students, as opposed to a framework for presuming competence (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

The third, and most obvious, contradiction in Jeannie's statement is that students "will end up where they belong...in a more inclusive self-contained classroom." "Inclusive" classrooms and "self-contained" classrooms are oppositional binaries in education—it is impossible to be in both at the same time. Downing and Peckham-Hardin (2007) argue "Inclusion is now the assumption that students with severe disabilities will be educated in typical classrooms, not that they are still trying to gain access" (p. 16). I believe Jeannie means here that students should be educated in a mainstreaming model where students with disabilities are placed in special classrooms for most of the school day but have the option of attending one or two general education classes throughout the school day. Mainstreaming is typically conducted

on a student-by-student basis, which is very different from the more systemic restructuring that is the foundation of the All Means All Project. Jeannie also seems to suggest here that there is something natural about the placement process for certain students—that some students more naturally “belong” in certain classrooms than others.

The meeting ended shortly after the exchange above, but not before the principal commented about the recent CSE meetings with district administrators:

It really was not well-handled. Our special ed teacher was reprimanded by the committee right there in front of everyone. I don't know if that is just her personality or what but it wasn't very professional. They were not sensitive to what we've been doing here.

Angela had the opportunity here to say, “The committee is right. We have to change our delivery model to fit the student's needs.” Instead, she publicly expressed her frustration that Kennedy School teachers were reprimanded by district administrators, creating a diversion from, rather than an alliance with, the mission and vision of district administration. Angela and Jeannie, though, were not the only stakeholders frustrated. John also asked during the meeting:

How much effort and time do we put into that one child? Because it takes away from the other 18 kids who are suffering because I can't get to them. These are the kinds of kids who can suck up every minute of every day. We can do all the mental gymnastics with them but are they going to be doing that with them next year when they have six or seven teachers instead of two? It's a delicate balance. How do kids come out of this? Other kids are at high levels. What we have to do with this child is completely different from what the other kids are doing.

There are several assumptions embedded in John's statement above. First, John has a very narrow understanding of the nature of supports provided for students. He seems to conceptualize

special education supports as only being good for students with identified disabilities rather than these types of supports as good for all students in the classroom. Because he only sees these supports as applicable to the students with disabilities, he thinks of the time he has to spend providing these supports as time he has to spend away from supporting other students in the classroom. These supports are also cast as finite resources. There is only so much of him (and the support he provides) to go around. He fails here to conceptualize how students can support one another and how cooperative structures in the classroom can scaffold many students' needs at one time.

A second underlying assumption in John's statement is that the students with disabilities only take away supports, adding nothing of value to the classroom community. He fails to consider the ways in which students with disabilities enrich the educational and social experiences of the students without disabilities. He also seems to assume here that the only education-related needs in the classroom that are not being met are those that belong to the students with identified disabilities. In reality, there are many students without disability labels who have academic and social needs that need to be met.

Finally, John seems to be "stuck" in categorical thinking. Because he conceptualizes the students as belonging to two distinct categories, those with and without disabilities, he thinks of the two groups of students as needing different things. The result of such limited thinking is that he is unable to see the similarities between the two groups of students. If he were able to see the group as one, rather than "these are my students" and "those are Jeannie's students," he may be able to think more creatively about how to embed supports for all students.

I sensed the deflation in John's and Jeannie's voices as they spoke in the quotes above, so I decided that I would offer to help in any way that I could. I had a few hours each week, which I

could spend in their classroom and help with any of their students. John replied that they have a big meeting this Thursday to discuss student placements and that he would let me know after the meeting. John expected that the meeting would give him a better idea about what transition plans needed to look like for two of the students.

The following day, however, another doctoral student and I had an interview scheduled with one of the assistant principals, Paul Wilson. When we arrived, the principal, Angela Kline, asked if it was okay if we interviewed all three of them together rather than spend time interviewing them all separately. At the beginning of the interview, I asked the group to describe the All Means All Project. The principal responded, “I think we think of it the same...as an inclusive school where all children are seen as one body. No limitations. Everybody equally.” Paul added, “Everybody belongs. We hope that everybody thrives.”

During the course of the interview, I raised the subject of wanting to move students out of the school. The principal quickly deferred to the assistant principal. Paul described one of the students who had a CSE meeting the next day as a student who has developed real anxiety about coming to school: “He knows that he is different in the fact that he doesn’t get it. The reading thing. And he’s embarrassed about it and he acts very inappropriate, almost like delusions in some of the things he says.” I asked about whether or not they saw this behavior last year, when this particular student was in the self-contained classroom and the other assistant principal said that they had indeed seen this behavior. “So it’s not necessarily a result of being in an inclusive classroom?” I asked, and the principal replied, “No.”

The following excerpt is a verbatim transcription of what transpired next:

Paul: And what I think our recommendation is that we change his identification from a 15:1 to a 12:1:1, which would be a smaller class environment. That's what...did you (to Delores) know anything about that?

Delores: I knew that they were looking at changing, but my last understanding was that mom really felt that the 15:1 itself was better for him than the self-contained class. What she really wants is self-contained class...and...

Paul: The reason why we went with the 12:1:1 recommendation is because...

Delores: We don't have it.

Paul:because we don't have it. And if we say we want a 15:1, but in another school than we're going totally contrary to what our charge has been.

Kevin: You don't have 15:1 here?

Paul: We do have 15:1.

Kevin: You have 12:1?

Kiel: No, we do have...we have two 15:1s here.

Kevin: Okay.

Nicole: But they're not self-contained?

Paul: They're no longer considered special classrooms. Now they're mixed in...just part of the school.

The group goes on to describe a first grader who has significant needs before they return to the topic of sending students out:

Paul: So, anyway, we've been getting the sense from the special ed [administration] that you can't decide which kids fit your model and which kids don't. You have to make the model fit the kids. So, after great debate, we decided with Marquis to request a change in

program to a more restrictive program with more support and that is what I'm hoping they will decide with mom's support or with mom's advocating. And that will provide him with a smaller class.

The Least Restrictive Environment provision (Section 300.114) of Public Law 94-142, now referred to as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* specifically addresses the restrictiveness of student programming. It states:

Each public agency must ensure that (i) to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

There is a legal preference for the education of students with disabilities, like Marquis, alongside their nondisabled peers over a more restrictive setting.

It is worth noting here that Marquis is not even a student in Jeannie's and John's classroom. His placement is in another co-taught fifth grade classroom. The reason why Jeannie knows so much about Marquis is because he regularly comes to talk to John when he is having a difficult day. John was Marquis's former special class teacher. I observed Marquis in his classroom on a day that was described by John as "a classic day" for him. I observed Marquis raising his hand to participate in classroom discussion, turning and talking to his shoulder neighbor when instructed to do so by the classroom teacher, and greeting me with a friendly, "How are you?" (For a more detailed account of this classroom observation, see Chapter 6.) I

was astonished that Marquis was constructed as a student who needed a more restrictive program.

The interview with Kennedy administrators continued on through other topics before coming to an end. That interview was conducted on May 20, 2009. Then in July, the other doctoral student and I sat down with the director of special education for an interview. He brought up the topic of Kennedy's request for change of programs and he was still visibly upset by the incident, two months after the fact. David Phillips recalls the exchange he had with this team regarding Marquis's placement:

Five kids they wanted change of programs. And every program that they put down was not in their building.... We sat in here. I looked at them. I said:

David: This child's been there since kindergarten. He's been there six years. He's been in 15:1 program. He started here with fifteen. How was he doing last year?

Team: Fine.

David: How was he doing the year before?

Team: Fine.

David: So, any behavior problems?

Team: No.

David: Academically, how does he do?

Team: He was doing well. He was growing.

David: So, now that you take him out of a 15:1 classroom and you put him in a fully inclusive model, you're telling me what?

Team: Well, he's having behavioral problems.

David: You got an FBA? A functional behavioral assessment?

Team: Well, yes.

David: I have one question for you. You're recommending a 12:1:1. Please don't sit here—The mother was sitting right here and mom had been a former student of mine so she trusts me. You know, she was good—Tell me you didn't recommend that 12:1:1 because it's not in your building. Don't tell me you just did that. Tell the truth.

Team: Yes, we did.

David: So you're saying that this kid who's never had a problem, you're willing to place this young man in a 12:1:1 self-contained, emotionally disturbed, basically male classroom? He's going to be eaten up. To me, that's unethical.

Basically the mother was like, 'I don't want him going back there. They don't care about my child. They just want to get rid of him.'

So I transferred him to [another elementary] school, to a 15:1 program. Because the mom looked at me and said, "Mr. P, you known me for fifteen years. I can't do this. They don't like...they don't care about my son. All they care about is throwing him out. So, I don't want him to go there.

Marquis was sent to another school because some Kennedy staff members constructed him as so disabled that he needed a more restrictive placement. In Chapter 4, I wrote that Marquis's general education teacher described him as needing medication because when he runs out of medication, "He is off, which is not good." She also inserted, "His mom is very emotional. She's very frustrated." The teacher stopped short of qualifying her statement so I was left wondering if Marquis's mother has her own emotional struggles or if she is "emotional" and "frustrated" because Marquis is a challenging child. It had not occurred to me, then, that

Marquis's mother may have been "emotional" and "frustrated," not with Marquis, but with his teachers and administrators at the school because as she expressed to David Philips, "They don't care about my child. All they care about is throwing him out."

One of the reasons why this story is important to tell is because it highlights the point made by the principal at the beginning of the chapter—that even though the majority of the staff had voted to move forward with reform, some staff members no longer, or perhaps never did, "buy into" the reform principles. If they do not believe that all students have a right to belong and to be educated in a general education classroom, then they will find ways to subvert this agenda.

The All Means All Project agenda was being subverted, in other more subtle ways as well. Jeannie and John attended several of the monthly planning meetings where McKinley University professors taught about the importance of collaboration, communication, team building, team planning, co-teaching, etc. I learned through observation and interview that Jeannie and John were engaged in limited co-planning with the other fifth grade teachers. When I asked Jeannie about this, she responded:

For us, we plan all day long: 'Okay, we're gonna do this. We'll do this,' you know? I try to hand him [John] my plans two weeks...a week in advance. Most days, I'm behind. But we try to work on that so that we know where we are in here, but with the other two [classrooms], because of our proximity, I feel like I'm on the other side of the world.

One important purpose in setting aside time for grade level teams to plan together is so that the special educator can take an active role in that planning. So, rather than two general education teachers making separate lesson plans and then handing them to the special educator to modify, the planning takes place with all team members present. Teachers create common lesson plans

and differentiate instruction for the range of students at that grade level during the planning period. This decreases the need for modifications on-the-spot and increases all teachers' abilities to teach to a wider diversity of student needs.

The university professors spoke at length on many occasions about the importance of team planning. It was described by one of the professors as "sacred time" that should not be disturbed. To assist teachers in using this time efficiently, they were taught how to assign roles, how to stay on task, what to say when the group gets stuck or is running out of time, how to close the meetings, and how to tie up the loose ends. Planning steps include: 1) identify target students; 2) decide on the subject, theme or topic for the unit; 3) think divergently by brainstorming aspects of the subject they could teach; 4) create a plan; 5) assess student learning; and 6) debrief about the lesson and the process. With Jeannie and John opting not to utilize this time set aside for the above purposes, they remain set in more traditional planning roles as Jeannie creates the lesson plans and then hands them to John to modify. Jeannie even admits, "Most days, I'm behind." Another important point here is that for the other two fifth grade teachers, including Marquis's teacher, John's presence and voice in planning, and in differentiating the instruction for a diversity of student needs, is absent.

Jeannie provides another explanation—that she and John are not physically near the other two fifth grade classrooms. She seems to imply that it would waste too much of her time to walk down the hallway to the other two classrooms each day. She does not seem to consider that maybe two days of the week, the other two teachers could walk to her classroom and then three days a week she and John could make the walk. She also seems to miss the point that joint planning could save her time because the generation of ideas and responsibilities would be

shared and she would not be doing all the work on her own. When I pushed Jeannie to explain how they were using their planning time set aside for the grade-level team to meet, she said:

We do have a common planning period in the morning from 9:30-10:15. We're too busy running off things, setting up our room, getting the normal day organized, that we don't use it, so that all we have is one day after school.

Jeannie and John could spend some time at the end of the school day preparing for the next day, making copies or setting up their classroom rather than wait for their planning period. My sense is that because Jeannie has taught for over 20 years, it is difficult for her to change the ways she plans and runs *her* classroom.

Administrators were aware that some teams were not using this planning time for its intended purposes. Angela was frustrated that many of the tenured teachers go to the monthly planning meetings, learn what they should be doing, but then do not carry that over to their practice...and she felt that there was nothing she could do about it. Jeannie also happened to be the teacher's union representative for Kennedy School, and during my interview with her, she said:

There was a big complaint at building committee yesterday, 'Why aren't we using team planning?' and I'm thinking, 'We're using this time to get things organized for the day,' you know? The principal wants us to use this half hour to plan and you can't.

Because Jeannie was the building union representative and a veteran teacher, she may have been attempting to exert more power than she ultimately possessed. At the close of the 2008-09 school year, she was transferred to another school in the district.

Because they were not co-planning, I was not surprised to learn that Jeannie and John were not differentiating instruction in the way that they had been taught by university professors.

Jeannie stated:

I teach at a fairly fast pace and children in the room are telling me, ‘You’re going too fast,’ you know? I’ve never had children be very blunt with me before, basically they just sit there and take it. One of my students says, ‘You’re going too fast. I don’t know where you are,’ which is good for me cause he’s telling me exactly what I need to do. But it’s something I’ve never experienced before.

“I teach at a fairly fast pace” implies that Jeannie has little understanding of differentiated instruction—that educators should not expect all students to study the same material with the same level of ambitiousness (Spillane, 1998). To Jeannie, teaching seems to be about delivering material one way to students. If she has always taught at a fast pace, it is likely that many of her students did not get what she was teaching. There is also a hint of pride in her statement that she teaches at a fast pace, rather than a self-reflective acknowledgement that she could do things any differently. Diverse student learning needs should provide opportunities for teachers to reflect upon the complexity of instruction and to improve their practice rather than opportunities to send students out who are not “keeping up” with the pace of instruction.

John shared with me how the lack of differentiation in planning plays out in the classroom:

We have to adjust a lot on the fly. I don’t work that way. I like to have my ducks in order and I don’t like to be surprised. But I’m finding that we have to dig into the barrel and...I got a file drawer over there and we’re pulling stuff out and saying, ‘This probably would be okay for today and it would fit what we’re doing.’

John is pulling things out of a file drawer on-the-spot rather than creating meaningful instructional opportunities for students ahead of time. Given the two statements above, I think it is fair to question Jeannie's and John's practices in direct relation to whether or not they perceive their students as "successful" in the classroom. Davis (2002) argues that teacher's beliefs influence what happens in the classroom context during restructuring. She says, "Teacher learning—the process of acquiring new ideas, changing or deleting old ones, and gleaning new knowledge and skills—is a key ingredient to educational reform" (p. 5).

Payne (2008) suggests that sometimes, "a few negative people can exercise power that is out of proportion to their numbers" (p. 80). Though Jeannie's position on sending students out of the school did not reflect the majority of perspectives shared at the monthly planning meetings or in the interviews I conducted, her voice did have an influence on Marquis's transfer to another school. Rather than use this opportunity to engage in collective problem-solving ways to support Marquis in his current placement, Jeannie's position was supported by her co-teacher, by Marquis's teacher, by the reading specialist, by the school psychologist, and by school administrators.

Will Jeannie's "voice" and her position on educating all students with disabilities in general education classrooms ever change? This question reminds us that Jeannie is not stuck in time; rather, we capture her in a moment of time. She, too, has the potential to move in her position about educating students now that the seeds have been planted. Jeannie may experience a critical moment in the future that transforms her thinking.

Fullan and Miles (1992) argue for stakeholders involved in reform to frame resistance as a natural response to transition. Individuals must:

Confront the loss of the old and commit themselves to the new, unlearn old beliefs and behaviors and learn new ones, and move from anxiousness and uncertainty to stabilization and coherence. Any significant change involves a period of intense personal and organization learning and problem solving. People need supports for such work, not displays of impatience. (p. 748)

Significant change may be more difficult for veteran teachers than for younger teachers, especially when they are being asked to change their pedagogy (e.g., expecting them to become a co-teacher when they have always been the sole teacher in their classroom). In the course of several interviews, stakeholders shared that “the older teachers are the ones who are having difficulty changing their ways.” The newer teachers are still at a point of developing their own ways.

Contradictions

Kennedy School assistant principal, Paul Wilson, described the All Means All Project as “Everybody belongs. We hope that everybody thrives.” The principal described the project as, “... an inclusive school where all children are seen as one body. No limitations. Everybody equally.” Given these understandings of the project by school leaders, how is it that some stakeholders arrived at a place where they were trying to send students out of their school because they did not fit the model designed by Kennedy? Jeannie originally mentioned that there were five students they thought needed changes in placement. Once reprimanded by district administrators, that number fell to two students.

Paul understood clearly that “the special ed regulations and powers that be” would not allow them to request a change in placement simply because the students’ needs were not being met by the model they employed. He understood that they had to change the model to fit the

needs of the students. The very next day, though, Paul stated that they planned to change Marquis's IEP to reflect that he needed a 12:1:1 placement because they did not offer that at Kennedy. Administrators tried to change a student's program to a more restrictive setting, something they no longer had so that they could exclude him from school, knowing full well that this, too, "goes contrary to our charge." Whereas schools used to make the argument, "We don't have inclusion here," in order to exclude students with disabilities, now Kennedy is making the argument, "We don't have self-contained classrooms here," in order to exclude students with disabilities.

Discussion

I do not want to suggest that backslide into more traditional beliefs and practices evidenced in this chapter was indicative of what was happening throughout Kennedy School. There were some grade level teams that were utilizing their shared team planning period and were enjoying co-teaching more than they anticipated, which will be described in Chapter 6. Yet, it is also true that more than one teaching team actively attempted to send two to five students out of the school. This plan was supported by the school psychologist, the reading specialist, and by school-level administrators, despite district-level administrative support for the All Means All Project. This suggests that there is something more systemic at work here and that these struggles should not be reduced to individual-level explanations (Payne 2008). Thus, the power of the dominant culture often prevails even when systems attempt to restructure or engage in reform.

At the same time, I do not want to downplay stakeholders' individual agency. Teachers and administrators are not passive recipients in this dominant structure. Though they may be heavily influenced by the policies and narratives which surround them, these do not entirely determine an individual's response to restructuring. Teachers and administrators are socially-

located actors. Spillane (1998) argues that “research on teacher change and policy implementation suggests that local educators’ beliefs about, and knowledge of, subject matter, teaching, and learning are influential on whether and how they revise their practice in response to policy” (p. 5). Teachers own racial, socio-economic, gender, and ability statuses all influence how they think of their students. Moreover, “Teachers’ beliefs influence the learning opportunities they mobilize for school” (p. 5). Their belief systems, and the narratives they enact, influence the learning opportunities they give their students and the way they make sense of student responses to those opportunities.

Much of the literature on school reform states that school leadership figures prominently in whether or not a school is successful with restructuring. In the case of Kennedy School, it was the district leadership, in particular the director of special education, who played a critical role. David Phillips’s position was clearly reiterated by Paul Wilson at the May 2009 planning meeting—that the school cannot decide which students fit the model, rather that they have to make the model fit the students they have. Even then, Paul was part of a plan to send a student to another school. It was David, once again, who realized Kennedy’s plan and he responded forcefully. Though ultimately a small group from Kennedy succeeded in sending Marquis out of the school, it was only because Marquis’s mother told David Philips in reference to Kennedy staff, “They don’t like my son.” Had Kennedy administrators recognized the vision to reality mismatch and used this opportunity to engage in collective, crucial, and creative dialogue and problem solving, they may have been successful in supporting Marquis’s academic and social development at Kennedy School. Furthermore, collective problem solving could have provided an important framework for supporting other teachers who experience challenging students in

Kennedy's future. Ultimately, reform will be most efficient and effective when there is leadership at both school and district levels.

This chapter highlighted how, "Change threatens existing interests and routines, heightens uncertainty, and increases complexity" (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 750). In the midst of these emotionally-charged changes, stakeholders may have the tendency to backslide into more traditional beliefs, roles, and practices that serve to strengthen, rather than subvert, the dominant ideology. Fullan and Miles (1992) argue that reform is complicated because of "the enormous overload of fragmented, uncoordinated, and ephemeral attempts at change" (p. 745). Because of this level of complexity, communication and dialogue at the monthly planning meetings were essential. Fullan and Miles (1992) refer to changes in "school cultures, teacher/student relationships, and values and expectations of the system" as second order changes, and I argue that these changes may be more important than the first level changes such as curriculum and instruction, student services, community involvement, etc.

Despite the skepticism and slow start, and despite the difficulties some stakeholders experienced in realizing the vision for educating all students, Kennedy teachers and administrators finally arrived at a place where they recognized benefits for their efforts. In the next chapter, I discuss the benefits that stakeholders realized as a result of their dedication and hard work.

CHAPTER 6

“It’s what’s best for kids”: Stakeholders Recognize the Benefits of Whole-School Inclusive Reform

Knowing what happens on the average in urban schools is often perfectly useless. We need to know more about what *can* happen, not what ordinarily *does* happen.

—Payne (2008, p. 7)

Kennedy School stakeholders began to question their former practices and began to create new identities and institute new policies and practices. Perhaps more important than recognizing their own growth, they finally recognized the academic and social growth of their students.

Questioning Former Understandings and Practices

Administrators

David, the Director of Special Education, was clear that the district needed to re-think some of their practices, in particular the open-slot system of placing students with disabilities. That practice is now being replaced by efforts to place students in their home schools and to be more thoughtful and planful in matching students’ needs with teachers’ skills. There are now more placement options at Kennedy School because there are three classrooms per grade level in which students can be placed. Students considered “challenging” are placed first within this model, and then special education providers and paraprofessionals are strategically placed to support students. Today there are several co-teaching combinations that can be utilized to best support students, so there is a difference in both *quantity* and *kind* when compared to the previous model of two self-contained classrooms with one teacher in each room.

David also expressed concern with the number of students identified to receive special education services. With a school identification rate of 26 percent, David says:

Kennedy has one of the highest percentages of kids identified in the district and my guess is that 5-6 percent of those students are not special needs, but are more a function of our system. They didn't get services early on so now they are behind. You can't tell me that if I walked into any of these rooms that one in five or six kids has a disability. No way.

David is working at the district administration level to roll out a system for getting students more access to skills in the earlier grades so that some of them will not be identified for services in their later elementary school years. One of the goals for his department is to reduce mobility by keeping children in their home schools. Additional goals include improving the quality of instruction and working to not over-identify students. One way to reduce the number of students identified for special educational services is to problematize what "counts" as disability in schools. David recounts:

Parents and teachers will come to [the CSE] committee and say, "How come this kid's not identified? He's three years behind." I say, "Yeah, but he hasn't attended school. Out of the three years he's missed 190 days. You're not disabled if you've missed over half the instruction."

David calls into question the special education referral system. When students miss academic instruction, are they academically disabled? Should these students be referred for special education evaluation? Or should stakeholders look for ways to bridge the gap between what students should have learned and what they missed? These questions and more will need to be addressed as directors of special education and other school administrators seek to reduce the identification of students qualifying for special education services.

Teachers

Kennedy teachers began questioning their own understandings of what “special education” means and what a designation like “15:1” means. It should be noted here that continuum of services, under the IDEA, is determined by the percentage of time that students receive either direct or indirect services. There is no mention of 15:1 or 12:1:1 ratios in the IDEA, however some school districts, like the one that Kennedy School belongs to, operationalize service provision by using terms like 15:1. In other states, schools use different terminology to designate the continuum of services.

Placements described as “15:1” and “12:1:1” posed significant challenges to teachers’ thinking. Those designations had come to be equated with classroom locations (e.g., “the self-contained 12:1:1 room”) and as identities (e.g., “I’m a 15:1 teacher” or “DeMarcus is a 15:1 kid.”). Staff members struggled to re-conceptualize these designations as the percentage of time that students have access to special education services per school day. The most restrictive placement is 1:1, referring to a ratio of one student to one adult. This level of support can be provided by the special education teacher, a related-service provider, or a paraprofessional who is supervised by a certified special education teacher. So a student who receives 1:1 services can receive those services in a general education classroom. A classroom designated 12:1:1 refers to 12 students to one teacher to one paraprofessional. This level of support could likewise be provided in a general education classroom with more than 20 students. It would simply mean that for a certain percentage of the school day, in addition to the general education teacher who is in the classroom all day, there would also be a special education teacher, and one paraprofessional. On paper, at least as far as district documentation went, Kennedy School did not provide 12:1:1 services for students. Those services were provided at other schools in the district. They did, however, continue to provide 15:1 services (on paper), referring to the ratio of 15 students to one

special education teacher. After restructuring, Kennedy staff provided this level of support in general education classrooms. Today, special education teachers sit with grade-level teams and modify instruction during planning, which also “counts” as services provided.

A typical question raised by teachers during the planning meetings was the following, “How are we still complying with IEPs? If students have a 15:1 but they’re in a classroom with 24 students and a certified special ed teacher maybe half a day?” The university professors guiding the reform explained that designations such as 12:1:1 and 15:1 are simply staffing patterns that this school district uses. They also reminded Kennedy staff that special education teachers are trained with skills to support students with disabilities. In other words, they are not trained to work exclusively with “15:1 students.”

University professors continued to encourage stakeholders to see the difference between the amount of time a student qualifies for special education services versus the location in which those services are provided. Staff was reminded that they still offer a continuum of services at Kennedy in terms of options for classroom placement, use of co-teaching teams, specifically designed special education and related services, amount of time a student has access to a special education teacher, the use of team planning meetings, etc. Because the school no longer had special classrooms and pull-out resource rooms, teachers had difficulty conceptualizing that they still offered a continuum of services, until it was pointed out to them.

Staff then expressed concern that it was not possible for all the students identified to have access to a special education teacher that amount of time each day, especially since no new special education teachers had been added. The explanation given by the university professors, and re-iterated several times throughout the school year, was that as long as the students have access to specially designed and modified classroom work, created by the special education

provider with written directions, any adult could provide the special education service, including a general education teacher or a paraprofessional. Eventually, “15:1” ceased being associated with a classroom placement and teachers began thinking more flexibly about how they could provide services to best support student learning.

Instituting New Understandings and Practices

District Level Administrators

The school district superintendent articulated a progressive vision for reform. His goal looking forward is to re-create the restructuring process, exhibited by Kennedy School and Woodrow Wilson School, in the other schools in the district. In so doing, Superintendent Robert LaPorte acknowledges the importance of both authenticity and sustainability:

There’s got to be ownership from the schools, so they will develop slightly differently.

There won’t be one way to do it. Our benchmark, though from the district level is how many self-contained classrooms have you eliminated? But whether you decide push-in or pull-out and some of those kinds of decisions, what they do with their teaching assistant, how they do the co-teaching models, the ownership has got to be from them. It can’t be from this office.

Robert LaPorte’s vision here differs slightly from the vision of the university professors spearheading this reform. He believes that stakeholder’s ownership of the reform will come more easily when stakeholders have input about whether services are pull-out or push-in. Though the university professors never told Kennedy stakeholders that they had to push services into the classroom, they did present the research on the effectiveness of services when they are pushed into the classroom. As a result, when Kennedy School staff restructured, they eliminated their resource rooms altogether. Robert LaPorte was not privy to those presentations and

conversations and that is probably why he implies above that these choices are minor implementation choices.

According to Robert, schools must first lay out a plan for moving forward. The next step is to find examples within each school because people always think that their circumstances are so different that they use that as an excuse not to move forward. Then professional development and leadership should be areas of emphasis. Robert says of the above, “Those are the key ingredients. The board of education, the community, etc. have to be on board but you can’t wait until everybody’s on board. That just won’t happen.”

Prior to my interview with Robert, he had attended an educational leadership institute where he was asked by another school administrator about inclusive school restructuring, “So, Robert, is this your thing?” He responded:

Yeah, if educating every kid well is my thing, then yeah it’s my thing. But it better not be *my* thing because I won’t be here forever, nor will any superintendent. And that’s why at some point either legally or by policy, you have to move the ball down the court.

The challenge Robert foresees, in implementing inclusive restructuring district-wide is replicating the efforts of the two university professors. It’s taken Kennedy (one school) two years and there are 36 schools in the district. Robert says, “We can’t wait that long.” Robert is working to encourage the development of internal support systems to make restructuring of this magnitude happen at other schools that might not be as “ready” to move forward as Kennedy and Woodrow Wilson Schools were. Robert asks rhetorically, “How do schools replicate what they [two professors] brought to the table and with fidelity because they committed three years to working with two of the most willing schools in the district?”

Robert LaPorte outwardly expressed his confidence and trust in district employees. At a celebratory gathering of all administrators engaged in the All Means All Project, he remarked:

I just love hearing all the wonderful things you all are doing. This is very exciting. It reminds me that if you put a bunch of professionals in a room together, they will figure it out....My job is easy. You all do the hard work. I know it's hard. I know it takes courage, but it's the right thing to do. It is the best thing for kids. You can't let kids lose one year because that's a year they won't get back. So keep up the good work.

David Phillips, Director of Special Education, also has a vision for the future of the district. In addition to rethinking the open-slot system for placing students, he wants to scrutinize students' IEPs more closely. Gone are the days when students IEPs do not change for consecutive years of instruction. Now the emphasis is on staff really getting to know students and recognizing the support services they need. The IEP, then, has to reflect those needs and monitor and adjust accordingly. David explains, "We have to get rid of the boxes, take the labels off the kids, classrooms, and teachers." Both Robert and David are articulating a new vision, what Thousand and Villa (2005) might call "visionizing," or "creating and communicating a compelling picture of the desired future state and inducing others to commit to that future" (p. 59).

In terms of supporting district-wide inclusive restructuring, David says he talks about it every opportunity he has to talk to teachers and principals. He encourages them to look at their data and challenges them to look at their service delivery models. David has stopped short of standing up and saying, "We're going to be 100 percent inclusive," he continues, "...but what I have said is, 'We know that research shows that inclusive programming is more effective.'" Similar to the superintendent, David also acknowledges the importance of authenticity. He says,

“You have to give license to spread it out and let it become more gray. Allowing schools to have more freedom to try new things creates more interest, and what we’re finding is that they’re moving forward.”

The main contribution of the All Means All Project to the district, according to David, is that:

All Means All planted some seeds. Everybody’s saying. “We want to do All Means All.”

Well, we don’t *do* All Means All. It’s a philosophy, so I share that process. It’s opened up a process for looking at schools, having schools step back and ask, ‘What do we look like? What do we want to look like? And who are we serving?’

The restructuring efforts of two schools ushered in new visions for the future of the district and a renewed sense of energy and focus for district administrators. Kennedy School administrators, likewise, instituted new understandings and practices.

Kennedy School Administrators

In order to spread special education modifications in a way that meets the needs of students without adding any new teachers, special educators have to be integral parts of grade level team planning. Assistant principal, Delores, spent the majority of her summer in 2008 working and re-working a schedule in which each grade level team has 45 minutes each day to plan together. Administrators kept, “tearing it up and starting from scratch.” An added scheduling challenge for Kennedy administrators had to do with contractual differences for teachers in elementary school and for those in middle school since Kennedy is a K-8 building; there is a difference in the numbers of minutes teachers are responsible for planning time. Delores was challenged to find “wiggle room” within the contractual language to make sure that they were still within the contractual parameters. The building principal reflects upon the

difficulty of creating and implementing a schedule where all teams have 45 minutes together each day for planning, “When you think back to it now, it’s almost like childbirth. When the pain’s over, you forget. But it was a really rough summer getting all of this together.”

Creating shared planning time is an essential task for administrators to be successful with whole-school inclusive reform. With special education teachers participating in grade-level team planning meetings, modified lessons are created and instruction is differentiated during the planning stages rather than the traditional model where the general education teacher provides lesson plans for the special education teacher who then has to modify. Two teachers reflected back upon the previous year and the challenges of creating modifications under the more traditional model, when they sometimes did not receive the lesson plans until the morning of instruction. Anna, a special education teacher, stated:

I kept asking for the lesson plans last year but I wouldn’t get them until Monday morning. Then I had to still do the modifications. I don’t work best making modifications on the spot like that. This year is so much better because I feel like I can step into either of these two rooms without any problems because we plan together. Last year, I felt like I was always running behind, trying to catch up.

Under this team planning model, special educators do not have to wait to receive lesson plans that they then have to modify. Instead, they are part of the planning for differentiated instruction; they provide lesson-planning ideas and consulting support as they sit and plan for the range of student needs together with the general education teachers. For Anna, this change in planning has meant, “Any adult can step into any one of those roles and do the job because they know what’s going on.”

Some grade level teams struggled with time management during these meetings, sacrificing precious planning time together for conversations that were more social in nature. University professors tried to address these issues in advance by providing examples for effective management of meeting time that included delineating roles at the onset of the meeting. The roles included time-keeper, recorder, discussion facilitator, and others. University professors also suggested that these roles change often, so that each team member has the opportunity to fulfill each role. Teachers were encouraged to identify three children at the beginning of the meeting that represented low, medium, and high academic achievement levels. These students were used to “think with” during the planning of academic content and related activities. Once teachers had some time to practice using a meeting agenda and managing their meeting time, one teacher remarked, “We’ve been setting an agenda and sticking with it which has been good because sometimes we only have 20 minutes.”

One teacher complained that team-planning meetings were often interrupted, and this was the case for the two meetings I attended. The fourth-grade planning meeting was interrupted by the assistant principal who came in to talk about retention letters. The fifth-grade planning meeting was interrupted by two people: first, by Linda Graham who came in to talk to John McSweeney about proctoring an exam, and second, by a staff member who was in charge of classroom supplies/inventory. When the teachers complained that these interruptions were making planning difficult to complete, the university professors encouraged stakeholders to think of this time as “sacred planning time,” which should not to be interrupted. The message was clear for all stakeholders to hear. I did not attend any team-planning meetings after that message was sent, so I am unsure if this solved the problem of interruptions.

At least one grade level team, though, opted not to use the time set aside for their team planning (see Chapter 5). Overall, though, most other grade level teams seemed to benefit from this shared time. Ultimately, most teachers began to see that special education is not a place or a program but rather a service that can be provided in flexible ways. Not all teachers were as reflective and forward thinking though; some of the veteran teachers continued to struggle with sharing classroom spaces, changing roles, making planning times productive, and former special class students. Many of these practices are difficult for veteran teachers because it is asking them to do something new, something for which they were likely not trained. There will be a period of adjustment and of learning the new process, but like learning any new skill, stakeholders realized that they would get better with this through practice.

Kennedy School Teachers

Building level administrators had the additional task of creating teaching teams. Many teachers emphasized the importance of working with team members whom you choose. Unfortunately, the administrative team did not ask staff members about their teaming preferences. With the unencumbered planning times as the focus, and supporting the former special class students, Delores set about creating grade level teams without staff input. One teacher said, “We were told, ‘We’re doing this. You’re doing that and you’re gonna be here. Deal with it.’” The teacher continued, “We all respect each other but some of us just have totally different styles and ideas and we just do not mesh.” Another teacher remarked, “You have to have people who want to be together. It has to flow authentically, be in sync with each other. Trust is a huge thing.”

There were additional teacher concerns over shared space and negotiating teaching roles. Special educators anticipated concerns such as, “Which classroom do I put my desk in?” and

“How do I split my time between two classrooms?” One teacher also remarked that the special education teachers have to shift to different teachers’ teaching styles and personalities in different classrooms throughout the day: “In this room, I can chew gum and in this room I can’t stand straight enough. I have a hard time adjusting.” These adjustments may be part of the reason why a handful of teachers said that this year has been more emotionally and mentally exhausting than previous years.

As far as team-building goes, the biggest concern among staff members was the worry over having to start over building relationships with new team members the following year. For teachers who are moved to other grade-level teams, not only do they have to learn a new curriculum but they have to spend time team-building too. The concern is that the time and energy they put toward team-building this year will have to be replicated the following year, which essentially means taking some time away from planning for instruction. For example, special education teacher, Anna, said that she will have to figure out her role yet again: “Am I simply going to sit at the back of the room and scribe or am I going to teach? Are we going to collaborate and teach together?” One teacher recognized that when you change even one team member, it often changes the whole dynamic of the team: “You’re going to have another three months of trying to figure it out.” There was a substantial amount of mental energy and time spent worrying about next year’s teams.

Collaborative teaching. Collaborative teaching was described as “like a marriage” that begins with a common vision. The journey includes both “speed bumps” and “beauty.” Reading specialist Linda Graham explains, “You are married to that co-teacher. You’re married to that person and if you don’t have the same philosophy on children and on including all children, you’re gonna bump heads. It’s going to be a rough year.” Like in any marriage, there will be

differences and students need to see teachers work through those differences. Students, likewise, need to see the two teachers as a team, see that they are working together towards the common goal of educating all students, and see that when there's a difference, they can work it out.

There were several “speed bumps” that slowed the progress of teachers teaching collaboratively. One teacher shared that she has learned this year that some teachers may have a philosophy of inclusion but not necessarily a philosophy of co-teaching. Many teachers come into the profession of teaching because they want to work with children, not with other adults. Yolanda Anderson, former special class teacher, was told by a general education teacher, “Excuse me, this is my class and you're here to assist me” in front of the students. Describing Yolanda's co-teacher, Principal Angela Kline said, “She was one of the disgruntled ones. She didn't like the fact that I made her have an inclusive classroom or [that she] needed to work with another adult.” Even though administrators gave teachers the option of transferring to more traditional schools, many teachers opted to stay even though they may not have been completely supportive of the reform.

Other things that seemed like “speed bumps” in the beginning actually became important learning experiences for teachers. Collaborative teaching creates opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. It was common to hear Kennedy School administrators talk about the curriculum that special educators learned once they, too, were included in the general education classroom. Teachers also talked about learning new teaching skills simply by observing their co-teachers. Mike Correa reflects upon how he has moved out of his “comfort zone” after observing his co-teacher teach:

To be able to step back and watch him [his co-teacher] teach reading comprehension skills that I've never really mastered before, is so helpful to me because now, after two

months, I already feel comfortable to do anything that he has done and it's kind of taken me out of that zone where I was afraid to maybe not be able to do that.

Likewise, Diane Reed, trained in special education, describes both positive and negative experiences supporting students in math class. She describes sometimes feeling down on herself for not having the confidence to get up in front of the class to teach a new math concept. She continually reminds herself that she is a trained special education teacher, not a math teacher. The flip side is that now Diane feels like she can relate more to the students who struggle with new math concepts because she has learned from her own struggles. When a concept does not make sense, she models asking the teacher, "Why did you take that negative instead of that positive [integer]?" and she can explain the concepts to students in ways that make sense to her.

Deborah LeVine, a general education teacher, has been teaching for 27 years. Several years ago, she had the opportunity to teach collaboratively with a special education provider. Even though it felt like a huge risk to take, Deborah described the co-teaching experience as "so powerful and meaningful for me to actually watch the craft being taught...I was more self-reflective and I learned a lot from that other person." According to Deborah, co-teaching will always involve some level of risk because:

People get hung up on the power...who's in control...who's the boss, and giving up your autonomy. I think it's vanity too because you're giving something of yourself up when you have to look at that person that you're working with as a professional. You have to trust them professionally, and I think therein may lie a problem. I think a lot of people don't trust the other professional.

Deborah went from co-teaching in an inclusive classroom last year to teaching by herself again this year. She is a general education teacher in one of the three grade-level classrooms that does

not have students with disabilities. This year, she says she feels lonely. She grew to love co-teaching and this year she feels like she is back to “teaching on an island...something that was fashionable twenty years ago.”

Another educator, John McSweeney, talked about the need to relinquish power through collaborative teaching. He said that one of the key ingredients to successful collaborative teaching is “to accept what you’re good at and what you’re not good at. And know that if you have to give the power back to the teacher who has that strength not to be embarrassed by it. And learn from it.” Relinquishing control over teaching means learning to let go and trusting that students’ needs will be met in a professional manner by your colleagues.

Trust is an important part of collaborative teaching and it was a topic that came up in several interviews with stakeholders. For Diane Reed, who was teaching 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in the resource room prior to restructuring and is now co-teaching in a 7th grade math classroom, letting go has not been easy. Reflecting upon her former students she says, “All of a sudden I’m just supposed to let go of them? That’s been challenging.” Though she says she trusts her colleagues, it is difficult for her to let go.

Another 7th grade co-teacher, Mike Correa, trained in special education, shared specific examples of his concerns about students relying too much on the other teachers. The questions he asks himself include: “Are the students relying too much on the other teachers?” “Is there a sense of learned helplessness that’s going on that I’m not aware of?” “Are they having trouble opening their lockers and communicating with teachers effectively?” Reflecting on last year, Mike continues:

These were all things I didn't have to question last year....Do they trust me enough to come to me now [this year] since I'm not with them every second of every day to help them and to watch over them, you know, what they need?

Trust also includes trusting that the students will tell you when something goes wrong, like when a student loses his or her lunch number. Mike worries:

Do they know where to go find that information or do they look for it for two days unsuccessfully because they have twelve different teachers? Will they come to me and ask? Hopefully every teacher in the building is more than willing to provide student services and you have to trust that they are. And I do...I have ultimate faith in the teachers at [Kennedy] to be having those conversations with students.

Letting go and trusting others is more challenging when you know that there are some teachers who seem to be, "just going through the motions and don't seem to share the same beliefs as you." Mike Correa added, "It's difficult to work with people who really aren't putting the kind of effort into this that it's going to require in order to get it right and to give it its full chance at succeeding." Some teachers talked about other teachers who *need* training in collaboration, but they were not the teachers who took advantage of the collaboration class. These teachers were not seeking input or asking for strategies. With little incentive to attend voluntary, after-school planning meetings and/or to attend a weekly collaboration class, there will always be a group of teachers lagging behind those armed with new, creative, and innovative skills and strategies.

Collaborative teaching also means that there are two people in the classroom to share responsibilities. Mike Correa described being able to reach both the struggling student and the advanced student as a result of having two teachers in the room:

As a lone teacher sometimes you wouldn't be able to get to the kid who is sitting there quietly just reading a book because he had finished all the work and you couldn't help him out. Now that there's another teacher in the room, you can say, "Okay, what you can do now is take that and do this with it." Having two teachers in the room really helps you not only differentiate instruction for the struggling student but also for the kid who's sitting there bored.

For Anna, an added benefit to co-teaching was having the option for students to work with different teachers when personality issues surface. She says:

I'm not perfect. I get as frustrated as anybody and there are kids who need time-outs and need to be talked to by a different adult. There will be kids who I'll say, "I can't deal with you right now. You're being difficult. Go work with this person." And the kid knows that, "I don't hate you. I'm not mad at you."....You know, "It's not fair to you, to have me feeling cranky at you, so work with someone who's not feeling cranky at you. Do the work over there." They're not leaving. They're still part of the group.

Anna also mentioned the benefit to having two teachers when emergency situations arise. If a teacher discovers that a child has lice and needs to be taken to the nurse's office or if a child has an emotional breakdown, there is one teacher to manage the situation while the other teacher continues teaching. If there is a third adult in the classroom, like a speech therapist or a paraprofessional, s/he can still support students. Anna says about co-teaching, "There are simply more resources available, which is better for all kids."

Teachers often talk about their "plates already being full," and about not having enough time in the school day to cover all the material they need to cover. Sometimes teachers are resistant to suggestions of collaboration or co-teaching because they perceive this as asking them

to do more work, adding to their already-full plate. What they fail to realize is that collaborative teaching can feel like less (rather than more) work, at least according to Anna Martinez. This year, rather than creating two sets of everything, she and the general education teacher create one differentiated set. It may also feel like less work when teachers fall into a seamless pattern of working together. Mike Correa describes a situation with his co-teacher during the first week of school. Mike's co-teacher was in the middle of explaining something when two students decided that they were going to start teasing another student. Mike could sense his co-teacher's frustration and when the teacher stopped mid-sentence, Mike picked up and finished his sentence without him even looking up. Mike recalls, "The behavior was squashed without missing a beat. We were right back on track. It's making my life and his life a lot easier in that regard."

Prior to the implementation of the All Means All project, it was typical for teachers to create two sets of homework assignments and two sets of tests, one for general education students and one for students who required modifications. This year, as teaching teams co-plan together they actually *are* doing less work, as Mike Correa describes:

Now there's only one set of everything and we're both taking the responsibility of managing that one ball that's in the air instead of juggling five or six balls. We're focusing on the one thing that we need to do and we're not creating three different tests. We're creating one test and scaffolding that one test to meet the needs of students. I think maximizing your time in planning really saves you a lot of time on the back end. All the collaboration and preparation that you're putting into it, it really makes your life easier as a teacher in the long run.

District administrators' messages about the importance of authenticity in school reform trickled down to the teacher level. Special education teacher, Mike Correa, articulated the importance of authenticity when schools take on inclusive reform:

You know you can't think of everything. Sure you can try, but there's always going to be something new each time and it's going to be different for [another school] if they do it next year. They'll have a different speed bump because they'll have known how to prepare for that one student but they'll come up against something else that we didn't have to deal with. There's always something else. That's the challenging part...and the wonderful part about it is trying to perfect it and get it down to something you can make the best it can be for everyone. That's what it's all about.

Stakeholders have made it clear that restructuring efforts like the All Means All Project should never be pre-packaged programs that are for sale. Instead, such efforts should reflect a philosophy, a commitment, an authentic plan of action, and an ongoing learning process to educate all students.

Attitude for success. One of the messages imparted by Woodrow Wilson staff members, when they visited Kennedy to share their experiences, was the importance of going into restructuring with a positive attitude. Kennedy stakeholders echoed this importance during my interviews with them. They framed positive attitudes in terms of open-mindedness, flexibility and cooperation, and support for one another.

Diane Reed, special education teacher in 7th grade, said that one of Kennedy's strengths is the staff's open-mindedness. "We all know that this is new and everybody's willing and cooperative, for the most part. I think everyone is very pleased with what's going on with inclusion, the strengths we have." John, 5th grade special education teacher added, "I think it's

been ground-breaking for us this year just to think about teaching in different ways.” Daniel Silver, a third year general education teacher, described:

The older teachers who have been teaching for 20 years are really set in their ways and it’s hard for them to change. Me, I’m a new teacher so I don’t have set ways yet, so it’s not hard for me. I believe this stuff. I know it’s coming down from the state too. All schools will eventually be like this.

Anna Martinez, first year special education teacher, described how staff was looking to her for problem-solving strategies since she had just recently graduated from an inclusive education master’s program. She responded by saying, “I don’t have all the answers...this is my first year teaching. Really, all I think that I have is a good attitude.”

Having a good attitude and being open-minded seems to coincide with stakeholders’ abilities to be flexible and cooperative. When Mike Correa, special education teacher, was asked by administrators about whether or not he would like to loop the following year he responded, “I love the kids. It’s a good group of kids. I would love to stay with them and I’d be happy staying in 7th grade too. I’ll do whatever I have to do.”

For reform of this magnitude to be successful, people have to learn to think flexibly about the way services *might* be provided. For example, Delores Burns, assistant principal, explained that if you have an 8th grade student who qualifies for resource services, rather than pull that student out of the general education classroom and into a separate classroom, you have to instead look at the other teachers who are more familiar with the 8th grade curriculum because they are already providing services for other 8th grade students. Delores explains:

In this case, the resource teacher’s name might need to stay on the student’s IEP because that’s what the district requires but the resource person is not really providing the service.

Both the resource teacher and the 8th grade special education service provider attend the annual review meetings to set the goals for the student.

Once again, Mike Correa recalls the previous school year when the inclusive model they were using was not quite meeting all the needs of the students. That realization inspired teachers to try something new. Below, Mike reflects upon the changes he has seen in teachers this year:

Certainly our roles are a little different. Certainly the mindset and the mentality of all the teachers and professionals in the building have changed. Everyone is trying to figure out how they can best be utilized and then going from there trying to map out that road.

Maintaining a positive attitude and willingness to be flexible and cooperative will more likely be realized when the community of stakeholders feels that they are supported by one another. This sentiment was expressed clearly when stakeholders spoke of their participation in the collaboration course taught by university professors. Linda Graham, reading specialist, was impressed that 32 Kennedy staff members were taking the course. Of those individuals' voluntary participation, she remarked, "They're committed to figuring this out and working through it." Linda further commented about the staff's participation in the course:

It adds a layer of support for each other when we're trying new things. We can go to each other and say, "This went well." "This didn't go so well." It's easier to jump in with two feet and take a risk when we know that we have that level of support. There are people you know you can go to who get it.

Delores, assistant principal, observed this level of support first-hand. She describes:

You hear teachers say, "I don't know what to do with so-and-so." Then you hear another one say, "Well I do this or I do that..." This contributes to the whole professionalism of the building. It's a really nice thing to watch and observe the way it's evolved.

Mike Correa, and his co-teacher, are both taking the collaboration class. He sees this as mutually beneficial:

Instead of me going to the class or him going to a class and finding out something really useful, we're both there and we both kind of look over at each other and kind of give each other a nod like, "You want to try that?" "Yeah, let's try that tomorrow. Okay, fine let's do that tomorrow."

Perhaps the most significant change in attitude and support was demonstrated by Principal, Angela Kline. During the year when staff planned for restructuring, it was Angela who was most vocal about her concerns. It was Angela who expressed, "We can see if it works. If it doesn't, we can always go back to the old way of doing things. It's not cast in stone." Today, Angela's attitude is quite different:

In just two years, the whole make-up of this building is different. We're including everyone. I'm very appreciative of what's going on at [Kennedy]. We have a great staff who got on board with this and have acted so professionally. This has been a real collaborative effort. I'm thankful for that.

Angela continues, "We keep calling ourselves a collaborative community—a community of learners. We're learning and we just keep empowering the teachers." Angela provided an example of how teachers have been empowered and supported. Kennedy administrators decided that they wanted the staff to read *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, by Marsano, Pickering, and Polluck (2001) for professional development purposes. Some staff members suggested that grade level teams divvy up the chapters to each grade level and then each team present it to the whole staff. While the staff "took off with it," the union representative came back and said that administrators could not

assign homework to them outside of their teaching duties. Paul Wilson, assistant principal, remarked, “The staff put it right back in their face. The staff did it anyway because they took on so much enthusiasm and ownership of it.” Angela reflected, “They presented it and they were very good. They were very creative in how they did that so we’re going to keep doing more of those things.”

The year of school restructuring was demanding and exhausting for stakeholders. In addition to learning how to support students, they also had to learn how to support one another. John McSweeney, former special class teacher, remarked, “This year is mentally exhausting whereas last year was physically exhausting.” Reading specialist, Linda Graham, provided more details about this difference:

Last year we were doing a lot of planning on the model and what it was going to look like, and getting the kids the support they need without adding bodies was a real challenge. This year it’s more emotional support moving through this process, like dealing with teachers who feel like assistants and teachers not wanting to give up their power.

Essential to the maintenance of any relationship is working through inevitable difficulties and communication is key. With so many adults moving around the building, communication was challenging. The importance of communication for Kennedy’s restructuring took many forms. Anna Martinez noted the need for building-wide communication:

It might have been helpful to do updates at each of the monthly staff meetings because it seemed like for a while, nobody knew a thing about it. Towards the middle of the year we were kind of at a standstill and a lot of people didn’t really know what was going on. All

of a sudden, this is something we are doing. So maybe it would have been helpful if there were more updates, like minutes that were given to other teachers after each meeting. Anna raises an important point. Planning meetings for restructuring were voluntary and held after-school, so a fairly consistent, yet small, group of dedicated stakeholders attended. The overwhelming majority of Kennedy staff members did not attend, so their knowledge and understanding of restructuring was more limited. Anna's suggestion that meeting minutes be disseminated throughout the building may have encouraged more teachers to attend the meetings. At the very least, stakeholders would have been more informed about the impending restructuring.

Communication. In addition to school-wide communication, teacher-to-teacher communication also became more important. Whereas prior to restructuring special educator, Mike Correa, had a handful of general educators with which to communicate, following restructuring he says:

Now I have...probably between ten and fifteen people that I have to communicate with throughout the course of a week, so definitely communication is huge. People are using the mailbox and email and different types of strategies for communication that we have in the past because there needs to be that much more collaboration and communication in order to meet the students' needs....There's also many more people in the classroom so you're not always sure which person you need to talk to.

Staff members exercised flexibility, using additional communication strategies than they had previously.

Another form of communication highlighted was team-to-team communication, what stakeholders referred to as "cross-grade communication" and "vertical communication." The

sixth grade team talked to the seventh grade team about some of the students they could expect the following year and to identify students' support needs. Seventh grade teachers sat in on some of the sixth grade classrooms to observe students and to identify the strategies that were already being used to support them in the classroom, which they found to be very helpful. Mike Correa added that the speech teacher came in and participated as well. Prior to restructuring, speech and language services were completely separate from the general education classroom. Mike explains:

I was writing English goals for the students and she was writing speech language goals for the students and a lot of times they overlapped and we were doing the work over and over and over again. How redundant! Now we sit down for an hour and we get it done and that's it. There's only one goal to meet instead of three goals.

Communicating with parents was difficult in the beginning for first year special education teacher, Megan Ray. The school had been restructured and parents wanted to know how this new configuration was going to work. Parents asked a lot of questions. Megan says, "They needed an adjustment phase just like we did."

The "speed bumps" encountered the first year of restructuring were many. Tears were shed and some harsh words were spoken. Some teachers voluntarily left and some were asked to leave. Through it all, though, most stakeholders realized that there is "beauty" in this process.

A work in progress. Kennedy stakeholders talked about the importance of perseverance, remembering that the All Means All Project is a work-in-progress, and making sure stakeholders keep students at the center of this work. Anna said:

We heard from people at other schools. Woodrow Wilson struggled a lot. They were miserable for a good half a year. But they felt like it worked to benefit the kids in the end

and things have gotten better. So you can't just quit because it's hard for a while. It is going to be hard. All transitions are hard.

The decision to restructure should be made with awareness that commitment and hard work are essential. Perseverance is important because, even once a schedule is in place at the beginning of the school year, significant adjustments may need to be made. Yolanda Anderson, former special class teacher, shared her experience at the beginning of the school year, "The switching was really tough. At one point, I wasn't even seeing my kids [of record] but was still responsible for taking care of all of their needs." It took a few days before administrators worked out the kinks in the schedules. Today, Yolanda sees all of her kids in ELA, though they continue to be supported by other teachers in other classes. It's going to feel like it's not working when stakeholders are still scrambling to learn how to best teach students in this new school structure. This, once again, highlights the necessity of effective and consistent team communication and collaboration.

New practices will run more smoothly when stakeholders can think more flexibly about responsibility. Shared responsibility for teaching all kids, means that everyone's scope of responsibility widens. Delores Burns observes, "Now, everybody's working. It does show how much down-time does occur in buildings. You don't realize that you could be using all these bodies." Most remarkable to Delores is:

I don't hear them complaining, which is surprising to me. They were so ready to do the differentiated instruction classes. A great majority of the teachers took it. They know that there are things that need to be done and they're willing to do it. To me it's really nice that they're not grumbling about every little thing.

It is essential to keep students at the center of communication, planning, and problem-solving.

Angela shared:

The teachers all know that we are here for kids. And that the All Means All Project is not going to go away and I think that the more we keep seeing these positive things happening for kids, they're feeling better about themselves too.

Benefits for Students

I begin this section with a story about a 6th grade student, named Rashon, who has autism. One early October morning, at the start of a typical school day, Rashon's paraprofessional was "pulled" from supporting him to cover another class. Two observant students, Darren and Alicia, soon realized that Rashon's support person was not there, so they began helping Rashon with his work. At the end of the first class period, Darren and Alicia decided that since they were going to the same second period class as Rashon that they would walk with him to the class. At the end of the second period, Darren and Alicia and Rashon walked to their third period class together. Five minutes after class began, Yolanda, the special educator teaching in Rashon's third period class, noticed that his paraprofessional was not with him. She simply assumed that he was running late. Several minutes later, Yolanda noticed that not only was the paraprofessional still not there, but that Rashon was flanked on each side by Darren and Alicia and that they were guiding him through the lesson. Finally, Yolanda called Darren over to ask him if Rashon's TA was there. Darren said, "Well, he wasn't with him in the last two classes so me and Alicia decided that we should just help Rashon." Yolanda, unable to believe what she just heard, told Darren to go share that information with the other classroom teacher. Yolanda later talked to the first and second period teachers and learned that Darren and Alicia had indeed guided Rashon through the lessons in those two class periods. It was not until the third period class that the teacher noticed the

paraprofessional's absence. Rashon had functioned in, and transitioned between, his first three classes solely with the support of his peers.

While this scenario might raise legitimate legal questions about the absence of Rashon's paraprofessional for two whole class periods, I use this example to highlight how the students, Darren and Alicia, naturally stepped in to support Rashon both inside and outside the classroom. This example stops short of describing how teachers can plan for using students as resources (Villa & Thousand, 2005) but it does highlight how naturally students learn to support one another. This example also highlights an important learning opportunity for Yolanda in realizing that it does not always have to be adults who are providing supports for students. Kluth (2003) argues, "Often, peers will learn quite naturally how to support a friend with autism. They will know how to calm, teach and encourage a classmate without any direction or interference from adults" (p. 99).

Rashon was one of many students who were experiencing an adjustment phase being integrated in general education classrooms with nondisabled peers. Angela described nondisabled students' attitudes prior to restructuring. She says, "It was totally different. Nondisabled students had pejorative names for students in the special class and whenever they left the classroom, they traveled with the special ed teacher." The sentiment was, "'Oh, don't go near those kids.' Now they are really part of the group. It's really amazing." Another teacher described the transition, "Our self-contained kids were shell-shocked to begin with. Now, five months into this, they feel at home. They interact with their typical peers in the lunchroom and on the playground." Administrator Delores Burns adds, "Kids are working harder. They are looking to their peers and they are bringing themselves up to the level of their peers."

Social Gains

Now that students have opportunities to learn from one another, their social circles are growing. Anna described the emerging relationships:

These kids have authentic relationships with people who are different from them. They're not scared of a kid who needs something different. We don't have to have a big chat about why we should all like each other because they have that experience from such a young age and it's normal. It's when it's not normal that you get all these problems. Pulling kids out, no one understands them and then they become this freak group. No matter who they are. It doesn't matter what kind of group they are. If you're unfamiliar, you're gonna seem strange.

Several Kennedy stakeholders recognized a growing sense of academic and social support exhibited by students. Jeannie noticed increased peer support this year in her fifth grade class during math time. One of the former special class students sits in the front with a student who excels at math. Both students are often observed leaning over and conversing with one another about math throughout the class period. Another student in the same class, described as "good at math" asks teacher John, "I know how to do this. Can I go help someone else?" Even Angela, Kennedy's principal, remarked, "The kids are really modeling for the adults how to do this. It's the adults who are having a hard time with this." I believe that the peer support emerged authentically from students; I never heard stakeholders talk about how they prepared students for restructuring. Students were made aware of the changes once they returned from summer break and they could see that the two "special ed rooms" had closed. This was also when a banner was raised in the school and school administrators began talking about the All Means All Project—what it means for the school and for the students. Of course, once it was advertised as such, parents began asking questions too.

Placing students with different strengths and struggles in the same classroom means that if students are good in some subjects but struggle in others, they can support each other.

Different role models emerge depending on the instructional content and the context of the classroom. University professors have emphasized to Kennedy staff that accepting help from peers is important for community building. One teacher shared at a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting:

Kids of higher abilities know the words to use when teaching other students. There's no threat there. It's give and take. It's really beautiful to see. Just know that it is cementing in their brain when they are teaching some other students how to do something.

Anna added that teachers are cognizant not to “overburden” any one student. She said, “The student who is perceived as being higher is still a kid...still a student...still a learner. They still have their own struggles, so we are mindful of that.”

One day while observing in John's and Jeannie's classroom, I recall feeling surprised in seeing how seamlessly one student, Simone, provided support for two other students. I was sitting at a table in the back of the classroom as math ended and Jeannie announced that it was time for social studies. As the classroom movement and noise increased, three girls sat down at the same table where I sat. Simone sat on the end and Alaina and Deona sat opposite one another. Simone had a study packet in front of her resting on the table. She took turns asking Alaina and Deona the multiple choice questions. Simone read the first question to Alaina while following along with her pencil. Then she asked, “The answer is A or B?” After Alaina responded, Simone moved to the next question that she posed to Deona before asking, “The answer is B or D?” She seamlessly supported the two other students by reading the question to them and by eliminating two of the incorrect answers as options. Simone repeated this practice

for twenty minutes. She stopped twice to ask me how to pronounce two words she did not know, “political” and “European.” Finally Simone said to me, “I want to be a teacher.” I responded, “That’s great. I think you’d be a great teacher.” And to the other two girls I asked, “And what do you want to be?” Alaina said she wanted to be a vet and Deona wanted to be a nurse. In this classroom and in Marquis’s classroom (below), the students who provided the most support were girls. However, in the example of the student with autism who was supported for three class periods before a teacher noticed that the paraprofessional was missing, he was supported by one girl and one boy who got him from class to class and provided support during the class periods.

Kennedy’s restructuring efforts have fostered an increased understanding of diversity and community building. Students are now advocating for other students. The administrators were still surprised in the level of support demonstrated by students several months prior. A general education teacher made a statement in the classroom, ‘You regular ed kids don’t have to act like the special ed kids.’ One of the administrators described, “It was an uproar. The kids came down here. Even the regular ed kids were coming down saying, ‘The things she’s saying to those children...cause they’re really looking out for each other. They really rally to help each other.’” This particular teacher was eventually relocated to another school building in the district. It is precisely this kind of understanding and advocating for others that are important lessons for students to take with them into their adult lives.

Restructuring to educate all students in general education classrooms included several other benefits. Former special class students used to be walked by their teacher wherever they went. Now they transition on their own. Angela says even though it sometimes falls apart, the result has been increased independence for students. Once such student, Tyrone, went from a special class described by Assistant Principal Paul as a place of “concentrated anti-social

behavior” into a sixth grade class where Tyrone has “a locker, five classes, a book bag, and folders...” Paul adds:

You can’t even tell the difference between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in the lunchroom because now they are all sitting together. That is drastically different from just one year ago when the students from the special class sat at a table by themselves.

Even the students from the former inclusion classrooms are benefitting from restructuring. One such student with autism, was described by the reading specialist, Linda Graham, as becoming more independent and more confident citing that now, “he wants his one-on-one less near him.” Linda also added, “He looks happier.” These were the experiences, seeing growing social supports for students, the development of authentic friendships, increased understanding of diversity, and increased independence that kept staff going through difficult and frustrating times.

I now return to a student named Marquis. Recall from Chapter 5 that Marquis was described by an administrator as being too disabled to be included in the general education classroom. The administrator stated, “He knows that he is different in the fact that he doesn’t get it. [It’s] the reading thing. And he’s embarrassed about it and he acts very inappropriate, almost like delusions in some of the things he says.” It was Marquis who the administrators were trying to send out of the school by going to the committee meeting and requesting a more restrictive classroom placement, which Kennedy did not offer. I had the opportunity to observe Marquis in the classroom. I had expected to observe a student with significant behavioral challenges, especially because he was described that morning by John McSweeney as “having a pretty classic day.” What I observed, however, shocked me.

I entered Mrs. Perry's (general education teacher) and Mrs. Longmore's (special education teacher) classroom. I noticed Marquis right away. He was sitting in the middle of the last of three horizontal rows of desks facing the chalkboard. There was an African-American girl sitting to Marquis's right and an African-American boy who sat to his left.

Mrs. Longmore was seated at the front of the room reading a story aloud. Marquis got up from his chair and walked over to retrieve the stapler. He returned to his chair, all the while he seemed to be listening to what was being read. He meticulously cut, folded, and stapled strips of red and green pieces of construction paper. I noticed that he paid very close attention to detail as he folded one edge on to its other side (making a ring), which he then stapled. If the edges of the paper did not match up exactly, he took the scissors and began cutting. It became evident to me after a few minutes that Marquis was making a paper chain. Marquis spoke out a couple of times, without being called upon, but he certainly was not the only student to do so.

Marquis's hands remained busy. They never stopped. All the while, he seemed to be listening to Mrs. Longmore as she read the story to the class. I recall wondering how she might make the story more engaging with the use of props or visuals or the students acting out the parts. Mrs. Longmore stopped reading periodically to talk about vocabulary words from the story. The first word she stopped on was "patron." She read the definition of "patron" and then asked the students to raise their hands to give an example of a time when they were a patron. Students offered the following answers: Chinese buffet, McDonalds, grocery store. Though Marquis never raised his hand to offer an answer, he did lean over to the girl sitting next to him and said, "I was a patron at..." He spoke so quietly that I could not hear the end of the sentence.

The next word was "defiant." Mrs. Perry asked, "What would be an antonym for defiant? Turn and tell your neighbor an antonym for defiant." Marquis turned in the direction of the girl

sitting next to him, all the while keeping his eyes on his hands as they worked and said quietly, “I was defiant when...” Once again, I could not hear the end of his sentence. The next word introduced by Mrs. Longmore was “envision.” She gave the definition and then asked, “What do you envision for yourself?” Marquis’s hand shot into the air. He answered, “Seabreeze. Go every summer. Once a year.” Conversation ensued about Seabreeze, Water Safari, and the word envision. Here, not only was Marquis listening and paying attention, but he also understood the meaning of the word, raised his hand to offer his response, and delivered his contribution to the discussion appropriately. The next word was “legendary.” Mrs. Perry gave the example of Michael Jordan being a legendary basketball player. Then she asked, “What kind of word is legendary? Raise your hand if you think it’s a noun. Okay raise your hand if you think it’s a verb. Raise your hand if you think it’s an adjective.” Marquis raised his hand when Mrs. Perry asked if it was a verb. Although he was incorrect, this example shows that Marquis was paying attention, was listening to directions (to “raise your hand”), and that he was discriminating between answers. For example, he did not raise his hand for all three answers but instead chose the second of the three.

Finally Mrs. Longmore finished the story and announced that the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) officer would be there in ten minutes to talk to the class so until then students should take out their writing logs. Some students began grumbling and the movement in the room increased. I decided then that I would walk around the back of the classroom to get an additional perspective. I was standing at the back of the room, observing another student when I heard, “How are you?” It was Marquis and he was talking to me! He carried a blue recycling bin in his arms as he passed in front of me. I replied, “I’m good. How are you?” He responded, “Good,” followed by, “Not so good,” as he kept walking toward his desk. When he reached his

desk, he set the bin on the floor. At the same time, Mrs. Perry came over to me and asked if I was only there to observe Marquis. I answered in the affirmative and mentioned how I observed that he pays attention to the story and the questions and answers exchanged. She responded that he loves to build things and they told him that he could continue building as long as he was paying attention. She added:

He has good oral comprehension skills. You can read him a story and ask him questions and he'll be able to answer the questions. It's his reading and writing skills that are so low. And then him talking out, disrupting the other kids sitting near him.

I asked Mrs. Perry how Marquis does socially and she responded, "People like him. He has a great sense of humor." I followed up with a question about his organizational skills and whether or not she thought he would be able to transition from class to class and to his locker next year by himself, but Mrs. Perry did not have an answer for me. In fact, she looked at me oddly when I asked the question. She also informed me that he is on medication now:

Sometimes he runs out of medication so he is off when he runs out, which is not good.

His mom is very emotional. She's very frustrated. She's taking him to have a neurological exam to see if they can find out why he still isn't reading.

Mrs. Perry shared with me that he is good at asking for help when he needs it, "He'll say, 'I need help,' but then he wants help right then." I wondered aloud about his placement in the back of the classroom—if perhaps he might be more engaged if he sat in the front of the room. Mrs. Perry said she did not know. Once again, she looked at me like they had never thought about that option before. Here it is June, the end of the school year and they have never tried Marquis at the front of the classroom?

A few minutes later the PA system came on asking, “Is Marquis Davis here today? Can I see him for a minute?” I never did find out who was calling for Marquis. She never identified herself nor did she identify the location where she wanted Marquis to report. It was obvious to me that this was not the first time this interruption had occurred. Marquis did not ask who was calling for him or where he should report. He simply stood up and walked quietly to the door. He turned and saluted whoever was watching before opening the door and walking out. I decided it was time to move on to the other fifth grade classroom to observe another student. Before leaving, I checked with Mrs. Perry, “So your primary concerns [about Marquis] are reading, writing, and talking out?” and she confirmed. Marquis has been a student constructed as being too disabled to be educated in a general education classroom (see Chapter 5).

Later in the day, I observed the computer lab where students work on Read 180, a reading intervention software program. Mrs. Longmore was in the room so I had the opportunity to ask her about Marquis. She said, “He loves Google sites. He loves looking up things that interest him. Last week he looked up the Taj Mahal. He’s good with his hands.” I had to ask about her primary concerns about Marquis, “You all are concerned with his reading and writing and talking out, primarily?” Mrs. Longmore responded, “That and he won’t be able to sit for 80-minute periods next year. He won’t be able to sit that long. He’ll need to be moving and be active.”

To this day, I am still perplexed that Marquis was constructed as a student who was too disabled to participate in a general education setting. My purpose in recounting Marquis’s story is not to be-labor the point that the teachers and administrators thought of Marquis and his classroom participation in very narrow, medicalized, and counter-productive ways. My purpose is, instead, to use Marquis’s story as an example of a promising benefit of the All Means All

Project. Special classrooms had been previously described by administrators as spaces “full of anti-social behavior,” where “students seem to feed off each other.” The building principal did not even know the academic levels of the students in the classrooms because they had not been formally assessed. Former students in the special classes sat by themselves in the lunchroom, did not have lockers, and were accompanied everywhere they went in the school by the special education teacher. The principal recounted that the nondisabled students often referred to these students using pejorative names.

My observations of Marquis suggest a student who is now socially and academically *engaged* in a less-restrictive educational setting. Marquis not only attended to the story being read, but he participated in accordance with the instructions of the teachers. His “attending” may not have always looked like the “attending” of the other students—he rarely sat still in his chair, nor did he look at the teacher as she read the story, but it was obvious to me that he was listening as he responded to the questions and prompts from the teachers. It seemed to me that as long as Marquis’s hands were busy, he was able to listen to the story being read. Teachers also acknowledge that he has good oral comprehension skills.

The classroom that I observed was not full of anti-social behavior. Instead, the teachers provided built-in opportunities for appropriate classroom engagement with peers (e.g., “Turn and tell your neighbor an antonym for defiant.”). In this setting, Marquis is surrounded by models of socially- and academically-appropriate classroom behavior. No longer is Marquis isolated from his nondisabled peers in the classroom, in the lunchroom, and in the hallway. He now sits with his peers in the classroom, in the lunchroom, and he has a locker just like the other students. Furthermore, teachers acknowledge that Marquis is liked by his peers and that he has “a good sense of humor.”

Marquis is a child with many strengths. The stories constructed of him by his teachers, however, highlight his struggles and minimize his strengths. By the time I observed Marquis in the classroom at the end of the school year, these stories had taken on lives of their own. The process of trying to place him in a more restrictive setting had already begun. Teachers and administrators had already cemented in their minds that a general education setting was not appropriate for Marquis. Marquis's mother was frustrated and convinced that Kennedy staff simply no longer wanted her son in the school. The director of special education, at Marquis's mother's request, finally decided to move Marquis to another school for the following school year. Had the team of teachers been supported in thinking flexibly about how to support Marquis in the classroom, I am certain that his participation would have been met with more success.

With former students from the special classrooms exhibiting increased independence and self-confidence, more active engagement in academic content, support from peers, and recognition of success, it should not be surprising that stakeholders also saw a decrease in disruptive behaviors. The former special classes used to be "filled with behavior problems," according to Principal Kline. When the former self-contained students were in the same classroom, it was "constant fight, fight, fight. They really weren't learning. Now they love being included. They're just part of the peer group and it's not a fight," she added. John reflects upon his former special class, "They are doing a lot better than they were when they were in that 15:1 class because in that 15:1 class, a lot of behaviors, they just played off each other and this year, they're seeing other, you know, positive behaviors and so most of them are veering that way." Principal Kline said, "The referrals have dropped drastically this year. Kids are no longer feeding off the bad habits and bad models."

Staff members learned that the students love to be mixed in with other students. Angela says, “It’s hard to tell who the kids are with special needs, so they’re getting the concept. They’re feeling like they belong and they don’t want to be pulled out for extra time on testing even though we know they would benefit from that.” Yolanda shared an example of students she works with. Reminding me that their goal is not to pull students out of the classroom, Yolanda explains:

Most of the stuff we try to do in class, we modify it in class, without other kids knowing things are being modified. We don’t pull them out for tests...they still do the tests other kids do....We let them take the test in the class and then at AIS we’ll give them the modified test, so then they can compare the two.

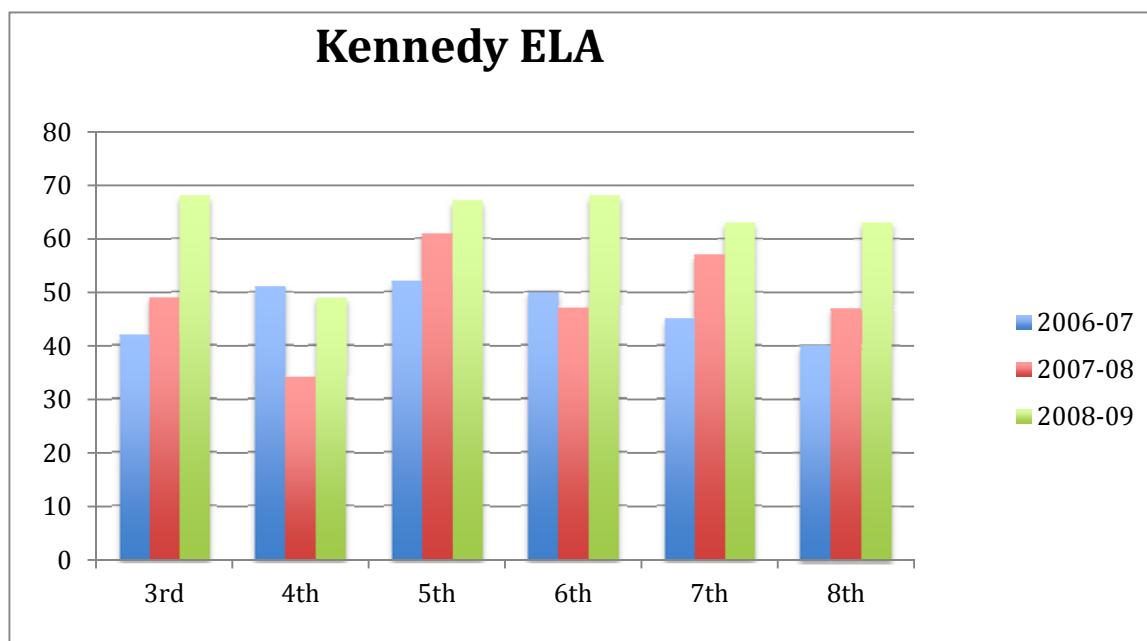
Some of the students will say they want the grade of the test taken in class even though the score may be lower than the test taken in AIS. Quoting one student, Yolanda said, “Nope. Don’t want that one. I want the one that everyone else took.”

At a building committee meeting where school administrators, select staff and union representatives meet to discuss issues, someone asked, “What about discipline or referrals for the special children?” All of a sudden the administrators realized that they hadn’t seen “so-and-so” yet this year. There were certain children who were in the office at least a dozen times in a week and now they haven’t seen them once yet this year. The answer to the question was “zero percent.” Angela said, “Since we’ve started this process, the number of referrals is zero percent.” John contends that behaviors are more manageable in a general education class because your message to students is, “This is the way it is in the real world and this is what’s expected of you.”

Academic Gains

There were stories of promising academic benefits as well. One student, described by special educator Diane Reed as an inclusion student, failed the first quarter but during the second marking period, the second test he took he scored an 84 out of 100. In the fifth grade class, 19 of the 24 students identified for special educational services scored a 3 or better on the ELA tests. Principal Kline remarks that students are “jumping and reading” and the key is that now they are getting instruction whereas before restructuring they were not. She continued, “We’re raising the bar now for them. They’re in classrooms, they’re hearing, they’re listening to what teachers are presenting that was never put before them.” Assistant Principal Paul added that they had no access to curriculum prior to this year.

In the spring of 2009, university professors sent an email showing initial test results from the All Means All Project restructuring. Table 1 (below) shows the percentage of students passing the state ELA test over the three-year period when university professors worked collaboratively with the school. The school year 2006-07 was the year of the initial vote to move forward with the project so no professional development had yet occurred. The 2007-08 school year was the year of planning for the reform and some preliminary professional development. The school year 2008-09 was the year of implementation.



Note: Percentage of Kennedy School students passing English Language Arts over a three-year period. Reprinted from “Student Achievement Data” by George Theoharis and Julie Causton-Theoharis, 2009. Reprinted with permission. The graph shows the percentage of students passing during 2006-07 (before the All Means All project), 2007-08 (during the year of planning for restructuring), and 2008-09 (after school restructuring).

With the exception of grades fourth and sixth during 2007-08, the table shows that there was a steady increase in the number of students passing the ELA state exams.

Table 2 shows how Kennedy School third graders compare with other third graders in the same district for ELA test results.

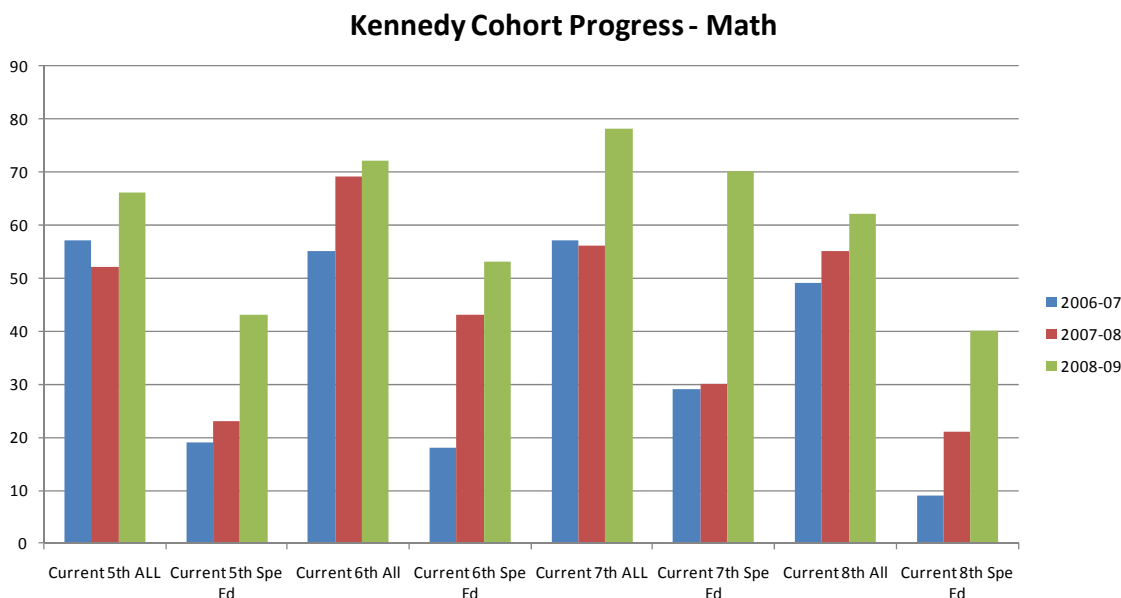
Percentage of 3rd graders reading at grade level

	Before AMA Project (2006-07)	After AMA Project implementation (2008-09)
School District—3 rd graders	41%	50%
Kennedy School—3 rd graders	42%	68%
Kennedy School—3 rd graders in special education	0%	27%

Note. Percentage of 3rd graders reading at grade level before and after the All Means All Project. Reprinted from “Student Achievement Data”, by George Theoharis and Julie Causton-Theoharis, 2009. Reprinted with permission.

The most striking observation here is that zero percent of third graders in special education at Kennedy School were reading at grade level before the All Means All Project. The same cohort of students jumped to 27 percent reading at grade level following school restructuring.

Table 3 shows the same cohort of students over the three-year period passing the state math test. All cohorts increased their test scores from the 2006-07 school year to the 2008-09 school year with the most significant increases being for the cohort of students in special education.



Note. Percentage of Kennedy School students passing math for the years prior to restructuring, planning for restructuring/some professional development, and the year of implementation. Reprinted from “Student Achievement Data”, by George Theoharis and Julie Causton-Theoharis, 2009. Reprinted with permission. This graph shows the same students and their achievement, the % passing the state math test, over time. The current grade with all students is graphed and students in special ed. is graphed separately. 2006-07 before AMA, 07-08 AMA planning, 08-09 implementation

Principal Angela Kline sums the experience up, “It really is the best thing for children because we see the difference with the kids. I mean, it is amazing.”

Conclusion

Kennedy students and staff have demonstrated the possibilities of what *can* happen in urban schools. Students with disabilities showed increased academic and social skills, increased independence, and decreased behavioral struggles. All students were exposed to increased diversity of student needs and supports. This growth by students was only possible because of the risks that teachers were willing to take in re-conceptualizing educational supports for students. Given their overall positive attitudes, including open-mindedness, flexibility, and cooperation, teachers were able to make it over the “speed bumps” in order to see the “beauty” of the process. Teachers learned new practical skills and thought flexibly about how to work within the policies of the school district. At the district level, policies and practices also changed as administrators began placing students more strategically and began questioning special education referrals.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: “In order to raise the whole group, a little tension and pressure is a good thing.”

What led me to this research was a search for the answer to the question, “When we no longer group students by perceived dis/abilities, then what?” I had learned through previous research that ability grouping was both “making” (constructing) and “breaking” (destructing) students depending on where they were placed in this hierarchy. The students who were making it were those who were taking advanced placement courses and educated in the gifted and talented programs. The students who were not making it were those who were “stuck” in the lower ability reading groups and educated in special education classrooms. I didn’t have to look any further than the example of Yolanda’s self-contained classroom in Kennedy School, where students were “forgotten” by the rest of the school, to see that the “breaking” of students was happening in local schools. I learned through my doctoral studies that it’s not enough to point out the problems without also asking, “What can we do about this?” I was drawn to the All Means All Project because I believed it would begin to answer the question of “Then what?”

This study sought to investigate Kennedy School stakeholders as they restructured their school to eliminate the use of special classrooms and to integrate all students into general education classrooms. I was particularly interested in how teachers and administrators understood the All Means All Project philosophically and how they experienced it practically. Stakeholders articulated multiple challenges and benefits to their reform efforts. Through this

process, I learned that restructuring schools to include all learners is incredibly difficult and utterly important.

At one point during a professional development session, teachers were asked to create a visual simile of collaboration. One of the teachers described an activity she had done as a member of the Peace Corp. Group members sat in a circle holding, with both hands, a rope tied at the ends. The task was for everyone in the group to stand up but they could not use their arms or hands to balance or help themselves up. People tried to stand up independently and they failed. Soon they realized that if they all pull the rope at the same time, they can all stand up together. The conclusion was powerful, “In order to raise the whole group, a little tension and pressure is a good thing.”

Barriers

What makes restructuring so difficult? There are many barriers to inclusive school reform and several of them are invisible. First, there are cultural barriers and none of us escapes being a carrier of culture. That is to say, we carry around in our minds what schools should look like, how they should be organized, and how they should run. Part of that is based on our own schooling experiences growing up. American education systems are built upon a stratified and dual system of education, one general and one special (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p. 10). Many teachers today were educated in an era where “special education” was a special classroom and the “special ed” students and teachers did not mingle with the rest of the school population. Given the perception that such systems are necessary and that they benefit students, Ferri and Connor (2006) argue that many people do not see that the maintenance of separate educational systems actually serves the general education students and teachers, more so than students who are served by these programs. In other words, when students with disabilities receive special

education services in settings that are removed from the general education classrooms, students, and teachers, they can easily be overlooked and disregarded. Such arrangements allow, “devalued groups of students to be quarantined—protecting general education students (and the curriculum) from their contaminating presence” (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p. 8). In such traditional arrangements, nothing in general education is required to change. When, however, reformers ask for general education teachers to change their practice to accommodate more diverse learners, like in the All Means All Project, reform proponents can expect to encounter resistance. Ferri and Connor (2006) conclude, “[Any] challenge to the dominant lines of power in the classroom or in society will not be achieved without a struggle—a struggle that often involves a renegotiation of normalcy” (p. 142).

All stakeholders in the American education system are carriers of cultural narratives about disability and about students with disabilities. Without necessarily articulating them, everyone carries around ideas that they have learned from growing up in a particular culture. Simultaneously they carry cultural narratives about English Language Learners, about students who live in poverty, about students who are African-American, about students who are referred to as gifted and talented, and so on. In this study, there were several examples of narratives about students being too disabled and too disruptive to be included in general education classrooms. Students with disabilities were constructed as being so far behind the other students that, at best, they may gain some social skills but the academic curriculum would likely be beyond their cognitive grasp. At worst, there was the fear that they would drag the nondisabled students down academically. Schwartz and Green (2001) reports that this is the most persistent, yet unsupported, myth about inclusive education—that having students with disabilities in the general education classroom will interfere with the academic achievement of nondisabled

students. This cultural narrative, along with other forms of ableist thinking, is based on the lack of exposure and experience to students with disabilities, fear, and inaccurate assumptions (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, Schattman, 1993; Kent-Walsh & Light, 2003; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, Nevin, 1996). The All Means All Project created a counter-narrative and, not surprisingly, it was met with some resistance.

Second, there are attitudinal barriers. Attitudes are sometimes difficult to separate from cultural barriers because they are often born out of the same cultural narratives and based on inexperience, fear, and assumptions. Whereas cultural narratives are so omnipresent that they are often difficult to pinpoint, attitudinal barriers often show up in the things individual people say. This study has provided several examples of stakeholders expressing their skepticism about the reform, their fear of students, and their disregard for co-teaching. As is often the case with culture, people fail to realize what they carry as culture (e.g., what they think and do) until they encounter something different. Even then, many adults engage in “ideological rigidity” (Payne, 2008, p. 9). It can be very difficult to change adult’s ideas and attitudes, and this often makes co-teaching and other teacher collaboration troublesome. Payne (2008) reduces school reform failure to adults working within schools. He contends, “Reform after reform fails because of nothing more complicated than the sheer inability of adults to cooperate with one another” (p. 6). In the All Means All Project, co-teaching threatened the social arrangements that were most familiar to teachers—social arrangements that were built upon the norms of isolation and competitiveness (p. 32).

Another thing that complicated the reform at Kennedy School was that the majority of staff members did not attend the monthly planning meetings, therefore, they missed out on important opportunities to learn how to support a range of student abilities, how to engage in

productive team planning, and how to co-teach with other adults. Payne (2008) argues that this is common practice among school reformers—that there is a small group of dedicated teachers who carry the load and other teachers do not come on board as anticipated (p. 29). Perhaps more important, the teachers who did not attend the meetings did not experience the dissonance between the cultural narratives they carried in their heads and the counter-narratives being created through the All Means All monthly planning meetings. Even for those adults who regularly attended the meetings, there were some who still questioned if this model was “right” for all students.

The invisible cultural narratives and attitudinal barriers came to the fore in Chapter 4, when I introduced readers to an African-American boy named DeMarcus, who had been described as “...ED...he is the label. He looks exactly like a classic ED kid.” Prior to restructuring Kennedy School, most teachers did not have to worry about students like DeMarcus, or any of the other students in John McSweeney’s and Yolanda Anderson’s special education classrooms. DeMarcus and his peers spent all day in the same classroom together; they even sat at the same lunch table in the cafeteria. Kennedy teachers and administrators referred to them as, “the self-contained kids.”

In studying the intersection of race and ability following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Ferri and Connor (2006) argue that special education has served the interests of segregationists. When racial segregation in education was outlawed through the *Brown* decision in 1954, special classrooms became spaces where segregation was re-created from within. Though the passage of the *IDEA* in 1975 was successful in bringing thousands of students into schools, students whom had previously been denied opportunities for education, it

was not without unforeseeable repercussions. Special classrooms became sanctioned *separate* spaces for certain students deemed too disabled to be educated in general education spaces.

Danforth and Smith (2005) cite a sobering statistic about the percentage of students labeled with Emotional Disturbance following the passage of *IDEA*:

A 1980 study (National Rural Research and Personnel Preparation Project, 1980) found that PL 94-142 had brought about an immediate 478% increase in the number of students labeled ED in American public schools in less than 5 years. This sharp jump in the number of ED-labeled students in public education was a combination of the acceptance of this excluded group into the public schools and the new diagnosis of ED among many students who had been considered nondisabled prior to the implementation of PL 94-142. Still today, black students are twice as likely as white students to be labeled with ED, three times as likely to be labeled with MR, and 1.5 times more likely to be labeled with LD (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

After restructuring at Kennedy, the students—mostly black and male—began attending classes with all the other students. Perhaps for the first time in their careers, stakeholders were asked to think about these students in ways that they were not asked to previously. Restructuring disrupted the existing order of business at Kennedy School, where students with “ED” were educated separately from the “non-ED” students, and some teachers and administrators struggled to critically reflect upon the meanings they brought to this transition. Many stakeholders failed to see how they were using “self-contained” as an identity that followed students, rather than as a description of students’ former classroom placement. In continuing to talk about students as “self-contained,” they continued to construct these students as “different” which led them to question if this model was “right” for all students. Deficit-based beliefs about students can and

often do persist even in the presence of counter examples that demonstrate the capabilities of students (Collins, 2003). The data presented in Chapter 4 suggest how the very presence of the formerly “self-contained” students in general education classrooms can disrupt deeply-held beliefs about the “need” to sort students into separate education systems. Teachers’ and administrators’ constructions of students, through their talk about them, laid the foundation for Marquis’s story in Chapter 5.

Inclusive school reform is not easy and some stakeholders seemed to be looking for the path of least resistance. Marquis’s story ends with plans to send him to a different school at the beginning of the next school year. At least one teacher and one administrator were so invested in removing him that they went to lengths to argue for a change in placement to a more restrictive setting precisely *because* they no longer had such a setting at Kennedy School. I think Marquis’s story speaks to what Payne refers to as the demoralization of teachers. He argues, “Demoralized teachers are not just people who don’t trust; they are people invested in not trusting” (p. 62). Both general education teachers, the one who told “her” students not to act like “Yolanda’s” students and Jeannie, who had decided that some kids just don’t fit this model, were “clearly invested in the idea of the ineducability” of these formerly self-contained children (Payne, 2008, p. 73). Often teachers engage in belief systems such as this to distance themselves from the responsibility of changing their teaching practices. The principal sensed that no amount of professional development was going to change the deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes held by these two teachers. Principal Angela Kline responded to these barriers by relocating the teachers to other schools in the district.

Dominant cultural narratives about students and about schooling practices were challenged when Kennedy School restructured. The vision for educating all students, hence the

name, the All Means All Project, grew dim when stakeholders were faced with the daily challenges that accompanied restructuring. Incidentally, the monthly planning meetings were discontinued when the university professors began teaching a weekly collaboration course at the school. What school administrators failed to realize was that the weekly course did not take the place of a monthly planning meeting nor did it fill the need of stakeholders to reflect upon, and to process, what was happening within the school. The void left when the meetings discontinued contributed to a growing mismatch between the vision and the reality of their reform.

Payne (2008) argues for the importance of stakeholders having time to share in on-going reflection and in the pooling of information (p. 31). This finding is also consistent with Davis (2002) in "Change is Hard." Not only did the teachers at Kennedy School no longer have the time and space to share ideas about restructuring, team building, co-teaching, etc., they also missed out on constructivist opportunities to consider their own teaching philosophies, to draw upon their own previous knowledge systems, and to work together to meet the authentic needs within their own school context. Surface-level restructuring, in other words attending to the schedule, classroom configurations, co-teaching assignments, etc. will only take a school so far; deeper-level changes in attitudes and belief systems are necessary to sustain long and lasting inclusive reform. These changes will only come when stakeholders experience dissonance with their previously held beliefs and attitudes, and when they become co-creators of new meanings (Riehl, 2000).

When the vision began to wane at Kennedy School, there was a tendency for some stakeholders to return to more traditional beliefs and practices, as was evident with a group of stakeholders who sought to remove Marquis from the school and to send him to a more restrictive classroom placement. Marquis's story highlights the power of dominant cultural

narratives to prevail in the face of difficult restructuring times. Had Kennedy administrators recognized this and sought to engage in collective, critical, and creative dialogue, they may have devised a plan to keep Marquis in the school. Stakeholders engaged in reform, therefore, should not underestimate the salience of teacher belief systems (Payne 2008, p. 171), for those belief systems act as lenses through which all reform movements pass.

The structural barriers at Kennedy School made restructuring difficult. Perhaps one of the biggest structural barriers was that the planning meetings were not attended by all stakeholders. Whole-school reform involves everyone in the school building. Still, only 9-27 percent of staff attended these meetings. Restructuring may have gone more smoothly had all staff members had the opportunity to learn new strategies, to ask questions, to voice their concerns, and to take active roles in joint problem-solving. Because administrators could not take away from instructional time, the meetings were held after school and attendance was always voluntary. Should teachers be allowed to claim that they are not prepared to teach in an inclusive classroom if they have not taken advantage of the training opportunities provided by the school and district? If schools planning to restructure could find ways to increase attendance at planning meetings, there would be fewer struggles encountered during the implementation phase.

An additional structural barrier is scheduling. Though the assistant principal at Kennedy School was successful in scheduling team planning time each day, it was not without difficulty. She spent the entire summer working and re-working a schedule that would give grade level teams time to plan together each day. Even then, not all the teams were taking advantage of this opportunity. These planning meetings were also frequently interrupted for other school business. Creating common planning times needs to be a priority for administrators and, once created,

those times need to be protected from outside interruptions so that the co-planning can be accomplished effectively and efficiently.

There will always be barriers to school restructuring, some visible and predictable and others invisible and unpredictable. I have summarized some of these above for the sake of informing interested parties of the tension and pressure they may face should they decide to engage in school restructuring. I do not, however, wish to imply that the barriers outweigh the benefits. As the teacher quoted above explained, “In order to raise the whole group, a little tension and pressure is a good thing.” The benefits realized by stakeholders far outweigh the barriers.

Benefits

What makes restructuring so utterly important? First, schools are becoming increasingly more complex institutions. Teachers today are faced with more emphasis on standards and accountability. Students are faced with more standardized tests. Schools have become alienating places for many students, and this is evident with the increase in school-bullying and rates of student dropout. The same might be said for teachers. During Yolanda’s first year of teaching, she was met by thirteen-year-old boys cursing and throwing desks and chairs over. She was told that after having four teachers in one year, they did not expect her to stay either. When students feel embarrassed, devalued, forgotten, and angry, there may be little cognitive and emotional energy left to spend on learning academics. When students are separated from other students, based on a perceived deficit, they will not feel a sense of belonging. You can expect to see an increase in behavioral outbursts when students feel alienated.

The All Means All Project gets back to focusing on a basic need...that of belonging. Creating a sense of belonging for students is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end.

The end is access to academics. At the same time, simply putting students in the same classroom is not enough. Students with disabilities, in particular, need to be provided academic and social supports that facilitate their classroom membership and sense of belonging. Community building must continue year round, not just during the first two weeks of school. When students feel valued, supported, and competent, they will “show up” academically.

Second, once teachers are attending to creating a sense of belonging for all students, they can focus more on access to academics. Teachers now are held accountable for teaching and assessing all students. The principal of Kennedy School remarked how surprised she was when formerly self-contained students were “jumping and learning” when they previously were not. She describes their previous placements as “full of anti-social behavior.” Today, these students have lockers, book bags, and academic folders just like other students.

With the exception of sending Marquis to another school, this story of whole-school inclusive reform does have some positive endings, and the academic gains reported in Chapter 6 cannot be overstated. When Borman (2009) analyzed the 29 Comprehensive School Reform models, he found that many of them showed an “implementation dip” in student achievement during the first year of implementation. Kennedy School, however, did not demonstrate that dip. Through restructuring classrooms, placing two teachers in each classroom, creating shared planning time, and providing some professional development for staff, students increased their academic skills and achievement scores. In an era of teacher and school accountability, these results are important. Considering that many of the Kennedy School students with disabilities were rendered invisible and not even assessed previously, these results make students more visible and part of the larger school community. These promising gains will sustain teachers and administrators through this difficult work.

Chapter 6 also shows how stakeholders began to question their former understandings of the meaning of special education and the placement practices they used to educate students. District administrators recognized that the most important contribution of the All Means All Project was that it planted the philosophical “seeds” for a process of having schools step back and assess what they are doing and to critically reflect upon how they might educate students differently.

The creation and use of co-teaching teams in restructured schools is crucial. Special educators and general educators have been trained with separate sets of specialized knowledge. Rather than practice their craft in isolation, co-teaching provides avenues for them to share their skills, knowledge sets, and expertise for the benefit of all students. Co-teaching is about all teachers taking responsibility for all students. Some of the co-teaching teams at Kennedy School worked together seamlessly, while other teams struggled with different personalities and the sharing of space and control of the classroom. Co-teaching is an area to devote considerable time and energy for any school that is contemplating whole-school restructuring. Teaching teams need to be supported where they are in their development and administrative teams need to provide teachers the tools they need to move forward.

Towards the end of the year of implementation, Kennedy School teachers and administrators reflected upon what they had learned in the restructuring process. They learned that collaboration and co-teaching must be built upon communication and relationship-building with one another. Most stakeholders saw the real “beauty” of co-teaching and collaboration. They also demonstrated that a common vision for educating all students helps ease the “speed bumps” encountered along the way. Perhaps more importantly, stakeholders recognized the academic and social growth of their students. The mantra for whole-school inclusive reform

effectively became, “It’s what’s best for kids!” I concluded Chapter 6 stating that Kennedy students and staff have demonstrated the possibilities of what *can* happen when teachers and administrators are willing to take risks to educate all students.

A Work In Progress

These are difficult times to be educators. It is commonplace to turn on the news today and hear that school budgets are being slashed and that school staff is being downsized. Meanwhile schools are becoming increasingly more diverse, not only in terms of race, ethnicity, and nationality, but by the presence of students with disabilities as well. Despite this increase in diversity, high-quality teachers are expected to teach students in increasingly narrow ways, in order to pass state standardized tests, mandated by the NCLB Act.

Many school systems are choosing to use their limited resources to support separate educational systems, one for nondisabled students and one for students with disabilities, even though, on average, the education provided to students in special classrooms has been less than adequate and students in these settings remain highly stigmatized. Kennedy School stakeholders, students, teachers, and administrators, exemplify the growth that is possible when already-existing resources are pooled together and when all students are held to high academic standards. Significant academic and social growth for students is possible when: 1) *students* feel a sense of belonging and when they have access to differentiated academic instruction; 2) *teachers* learn strategies to differentiate instruction to support all students and when they learn to build collaborative co-teaching teams working toward a common goal; and 3) *school administrators* guide school staffs toward creating and sustaining a vision for teaching all students and provide them with particular professional development opportunities to aid in their growth.

If the principles underlying this particular whole-school inclusive reform project have the power to re-structure one school, the idea holds promise for restructuring other schools. Students with disabilities may be provided access to curriculum and to nondisabled peers that they may have never experienced. Differentiated curriculum, co-planned and co-taught by two teachers, has the potential to reach more students. Teachers will learn new content material and teaching strategies as they learn from each other and as they negotiate their changing roles and responsibilities. Administrators will learn how to support staff to provide relevant and rigorous academics to all students. Ultimately, all students will benefit because they will be exposed to a range of human diversity and experiences, which will better prepare them for participation in an increasingly diverse society.

As suggested by Smith and Wohlstetter (2006), it is important for people to share their individual and collective experiences with potential stakeholders at other schools because even though the experience will never be exactly like it was for Kennedy stakeholders, the more information people have to make a decision to move forward, the fewer surprises they may encounter in the midst of restructuring. As teacher, Mike Correa, said about other schools that choose to restructure, “They’ll have a different speed bump” than what Kennedy encountered. There will always be some things that are impossible to predict in advance. Smith and Wohlstetter (2006) argue for increased knowledge- and experience-sharing *between* schools. When Woodrow Wilson Elementary School shared their experiences with Kennedy School, it proved to be an important turning-point in their reform trajectory.

Sharing information, experiences, and perspectives will be important if Robert LaPorte hopes to guide the school district through a process of scaling up. Scaling up is a process of taking what has been learned at one level (e.g., the school level) and building that learning into a

more systemic level (e.g., school district level or state level). Muncey and McQuillan (in Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, & Kerr, 2004) found that, “The more inclusive the reform effort—that is, the more levels in the educational system, participants in that system, and school programs that were brought together—the more likely it has been to endure (p. 17). Robert LaPorte will need to decide which aspects of the reform he wants to carry from Kennedy School up to the school district, and which aspects of the reform he wants to leave up to stakeholders at individual schools to decide. If he does not consider both of these carefully, stakeholders at some schools may perceive the reform as a top-down approach to leadership and may reject it altogether.

This study also highlights the importance of individual school leadership in whole-school inclusive reform. Consistent with Salisbury’s (2006) finding that inclusive education implementation is highly correlated with the particular principals involved, the role that Angela Kline played was pivotal. When she publicly expressed her skepticism, reform efforts stalled. Once she made the decision to move forward, she did so with vigilance, including the removal of at least two teachers who were openly resistant to restructuring. Likewise, when Director of Special Education, David Phillips, realized that a small group of Kennedy Stakeholders was seeking a change in placement as a way to remove a student from the school, he became angry. It was necessary for him to send the message, loud and clear, that this practice would not be tolerated. Though he sent the message clearly, that particular student was moved to another school for the following year. This was because the parent advocated to have her child removed when she realized that it was a hostile environment for her son. David Phillips’s warnings did stop the process of referring Marquis out of the school. When restructuring becomes difficult and teachers waver in their support for the model they chose, administrators can act as keepers of the

vision—guiding staff members through this arduous work by supporting their needs and by reminding staff of the shared vision to educate all children. Administrators should be guided through the critical reflection exercises in professional development workshops alongside staff members. When administrators waver in their support of reform, restructuring runs the risk of failure. This project contributes to the importance of school and district level leadership in sustaining reform movements.

McLeskey and Waldron (2002) have told us, “A good inclusive program can be no more than a ‘work in progress.’ Schools are too complex and dynamic for these programs to be anything else” (p. 72). I would argue that the same would be said about an inclusive school; a good inclusive school can be no more than a work in progress. Because teachers are the ones who teach students with disabilities once segregated classrooms are closed, it is important to consider their philosophies when planning for reform. This study contributes to the literature on whole-school inclusive reform because it shows how teachers need to be taught to reflect critically on how they think about their students, their students’ backgrounds, cultures, families, and abilities and how that thinking influences how they construct students as learners. Examining teachers’ underlying assumptions about their students should lead them to more effective practices.

No Blueprints for Change

There are some limitations to this study. The specific plans, events, and procedures that Kennedy stakeholders experienced are not easily generalizable to other school contexts, and any reform of this magnitude should emerge from that specific school context. Whole-school reform will vary at each site because school cultures, structures, and policies vary at each site. For each difficulty that stakeholders experience, there will likely be two additional difficulties they had

not anticipated. Charles M. Payne (2008) reflects upon his own experience with this realization when engaged in bottom-up reform in Chicago:

Everything was harder than it looked, everything took longer than it should have, often by an order of magnitude. Every time you managed to reach a new plateau, you saw, not the vistas of new possibilities you had anticipated, but new problems you couldn't see from the previous plateau. (p. 1-2)

Some school districts have histories of inclusive education while others have histories of sending their students with disabilities to other schools. Some school districts work in collaboration with nearby universities and some rural districts are located far from universities. The strength of a school's leadership team may influence whether reform efforts look more like an authoritative mandate or more like a democratic process. The point is that this study does not describe procedures or blueprints for reform but it does describe some teachers' and administrators' experiences, questions, concerns, and stories as they moved through the process. School cultures are difficult to change and dominant cultural narratives about schooling, about students, and about dis/ability run deep through all school stakeholders. Disruptions to these constructions and narratives will result in some human behavior that can be expected.

Another limitation of this study, and a proposal for future research, is that this study does not address the perspectives of parents, students, university professors/researchers, related service personnel, or paraprofessionals—each of whom play important roles in the reform process. These perspectives could be invaluable to understanding the process of inclusive reform.

Looking to the Future

Because schools are such complex institutions, even small changes often result in rippled effects felt throughout the building. Reform of this magnitude affects everyone in the school

community, and as mentioned above, there are many perspectives that are missing from this study. One future study might look at parents' perspectives of their children as they move through the process of reform. As students experience major changes at school, there will likely be carryover into the home. Parents, who most often know their children best, will be in a position to articulate the changes they see their children experience. Another study might investigate the experiences of related service providers, such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech/language therapists, as they experience restructuring, in particular as they learn to push their services into the general education classrooms rather than pulling students out for services.

The principles of the All Means All Project can be taken up by any school. To address some of the "speed bumps" experienced by Kennedy School, I suggest connecting these principles with the tenets of Disability Studies for Education and Culturally Relevant Teaching. The incorporation of Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) in the professional development of the All Means All Project may have made a difference in the social construction of Kennedy School students. Disability Studies in Education provides an alternative model for thinking about students with educational differences, where disability is examined in social and cultural contexts and in which constructions of disability are questioned and practices challenged (Taylor, 2006). Disability studies reframe disability from residing as a problem in the body (e.g., a medical model) to a problem in the environment. So, for example, the use of a wheelchair is not the problem; the problem is the lack of accessible buildings. If all buildings were truly accessible, then using a wheelchair would pose no problem for an individual. The same notion can be applied to education. If classrooms and curriculum were made accessible to all students with a range of learning styles, strengths, and struggles, then

students may in fact cease having educational *disabilities*. That does not mean that students would not still demonstrate a vast range of abilities; it simply means that students would be valued where they are and for what they bring to the classroom rather than be stigmatized because they are not at the level of the hypothetical “average” student. Students of varying ability bring valuable perspectives to the classroom exactly as they are academically and socially (Kliewer, 1998).

At Kennedy School, I never heard stakeholders talk about closing self-contained classrooms because they were socially unjust spaces. No one mentioned the disproportionate number of black male students who occupied the special classes. No one mentioned that it was unjust that these students had low reading levels and were seemingly no longer being taught to read. In the All Means All planning meetings, stakeholders were not asked to critically reflect upon their understandings of these students’ identities and cultures. Once again, when stakeholders are not encouraged to question the existing order of things, their assumptions and understandings of their students go unchallenged and thus unchanged.

I was disheartened with the absence of talk about racial, ethnic, and social class differences by Kennedy stakeholders. When stakeholders do not acknowledge the color of the student standing before them, they fail to see some important aspects of that student’s life. Unless directly asked, most stakeholders did not mention the ethnicity and gender of students in the self-contained classrooms even though they were predominantly African-American boys. Culturally Relevant Teaching may be one way to address the problem of stakeholders pretending not to see color and class.

Students often experience a mismatch between the home culture they bring with them to school and the school culture they are expected to work within. Harry and Anderson (1994) argue:

Teachers are driven by the structure of schools, which calls for control, homogeneity, and the inculcation of socially sanctioned behaviors and language. Rather than build on children's repertoire of behaviors, teachers typically aim to extinguish and replace these behaviors with conduct more acceptable to them and to move quickly to find the deficit in those children who proved less malleable to conformity. (p. 610-611)

Rather than teachers building on the cultural and verbal skills and knowledge that students bring with them into the classroom, they aim to change students into becoming more like "...middle-class Anglo American culture [perceived as] the normal currency of classrooms" (Harry & Klingner, 2006, p. 43). Those students who show resistance to conformity, are generally referred for special education evaluation. The assessment process, and the resulting educational label attached to students in the end, reinforces teachers' initial assumptions that there must be a disability located somewhere within the student. Once again, teachers are not asked to critically reflect upon their assumptions or their practices because the problem is constructed as residing within the child.

Teachers who engage in Culturally Relevant Teaching prioritize building connections with their students. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) says of teachers who practice these methods, "They demonstrate a connectedness with all of their students and encourage that same connectedness between the students. They encourage a community of learners; they encourage their students to learn collaboratively" (p. 25). Culturally Relevant Teaching may encourage teachers and administrators to critically reflect upon their conscious and subconscious thoughts

about who their students are and from where they come. If stakeholders can grow to appreciate the diversity of students represented, they may also grow to believe that “[all] of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25). It is important to know what stakeholders think about race, class, and gender and how these identities and experiences intersect in the lives of their students. I believe that only when stakeholders can have honest and open conversations, can they begin to value the cultural qualities their students bring to the classroom and build upon these rather than perceive them and construct them as deficits in need of remediation or as students in need of removal.

The underlying reason why restructuring is utterly important is that it is the socially just thing to do. When students are constructed as challenging the system, and are removed and placed elsewhere, the system and all the negative attitudes and stereotypes around constructions of disability are reinforced. Teachers, students, and administrators do not have to think about these *other* students because they are essentially invisible. The constructing of students as *other* (Smith, 2001) also means that teachers can distance themselves from questioning/examining:

- their assumptions about ability, disability, and competence;
- their beliefs about what it means to be a student and a teacher;
- the humanity of the children excluded;
- the ethics of denying students educational opportunities;
- the role of race and class in educational placement decisions; and
- the underlying institutional structures that maintain “special” classrooms for students with “special needs”

Meanwhile, with each passing year, the academic and social gap widens between students in segregated settings and their peers in general education settings (Fitch, 2003; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

To deny students the sense of belonging and to subject them to classrooms filled with “anti-social behavior” is unethical. With so much drama playing out in the classroom on a daily basis, it’s not surprising that the special classroom teachers were having difficulty teaching academic content and that students demonstrated little learning. I believe that all students have the right to a quality education. Whole school inclusive reform is one important step in that direction.

Finally, some readers may want to know...*Did the reform initiative work or not?* Restructuring of this magnitude is too complex to answer with a simple *yes* or *no*. The goals of the initiative were to restructure the classrooms so that all students felt a sense of belonging and were given access to rigorous academics through differentiated instruction provided by co-teaching teams. Assessing these goals, I would answer in the affirmative; this initiative did “work” to restructure classrooms by closing the self-contained classrooms and resource rooms. Students were given access to academics that they had previously been denied. Some co-taught teams worked more effectively than others in providing differentiated instruction. Some teams created more of a sense of belonging for students than others. The benefits, presented in Chapter 6, exceed even the goals set forth by university professors. Students gained social and academic skills as they increased their independence and personal responsibility. Teachers and administrators questioned their former practices and began instituting changes in their work.

Even though I answer in the affirmative, that the initiative did “work,” there are parts of the initiative that could have been done differently. I have outlined some of my suggestions, such

as including the perspectives of other stakeholders in this process and incorporating additional theoretical perspectives into the professional development led by the university professors or other external critical friends.

Sadly, for Marquis, I would have to answer that the initiative did not “work.” A few key stakeholders decided that the goals set forth by the university professors, and articulated in the vision statement, did not apply to Marquis. In this respect, the All Means All Project failed Marquis.

After two years of collecting data, I would conclude that the overall project is “working” but that it will never be completely finished. Unless the school ultimately goes back to the pre-initiative way of doing business, stakeholders will continue to be engaged in a work-in-progress. Stakeholders will continue to experience barriers and benefits, some predictable and others unpredictable.

Would I walk through this process with another school? Absolutely! The benefits far exceed the barriers and the hard work that accompanies such a complex change. The barriers are not insurmountable, rather they are opportunities for stakeholders to engage in critical reflection, discussion, and creativity. A little tension and pressure, when engaged in significant change as exemplified in this study, can be a good thing in raising the whole group to a higher standard of practice.

Appendix A

Fieldnote Example #1: Questioning My Assumptions

From an All Means All monthly planning meeting at Kennedy School on April 29, 2008:

A woman came in and sat down to Claudia's right; she seemed engaged, listening to me, nodding her head and smiling. I included her as I was talking by making eye contact with her as I spoke. She, too, is probably wondering who I am and what I am doing here.

I said to Claudia, "Your name is Claudia, right?"

"Yes. I'm Claudia Smith."

Nicole: "I'm trying to learn the names of people."

More and more people began to come into the room. A man I have never noticed before said hello to Claudia. She said, "Hi. I never see you anymore since I'm not pulling out any kids." He asked, "Why not?" Claudia said something like, "There isn't any space." Then she added, "I'm trying to do it in the true spirit of inclusion." Nothing more was said.

O.C.: When will we no longer need to make excuses for why we are NOT pulling kids out of their classrooms?

One woman sat down, kind of behind me and to my right (I could see her in my peripheral vision), but outside the rectangular shape made with tables and chairs. I didn't particularly recognize her as someone I had seen before. I overheard her say to someone, "I thought I better come see what it is we are doing next year." I think this woman must have been new to the meetings, and her sitting outside the rectangle was because she was unfamiliar with the seating arrangements of typical meetings. I also wondered if her choice to sit on the periphery, when most of the other chairs around the table were empty, was also probably symbolic of her "sitting on the edge" of the whole all means all process too.

O.C.: I should be careful of the assumptions I have made here. What I am thinking is that those individuals who are really "on-board" with the AMA initiative/process are the ones who have been at all, or most, or some of the AMA meetings. If teachers are excited about the possibilities, I assume they would come to these meetings to be a part of this planning process. If they are nervous and scared of these changes, I assume they would want to be at the meetings so that they will learn more about what these changes might look like. Hopefully, having an idea of what is to come will help alleviate some of their anxieties.

What I have equally assumed here is that people who are not at these meetings either: 1) don't care that much about what is happening; 2) don't think it will ever really truly get off the ground; or 3) are resistant to inclusive school reform for whatever reason. What I

need to be careful about here is not to equate not showing up at the meetings with not caring and/or being resistant.

The room continued to fill. At one point I counted about 27 people, which included many teachers, Angela (the principal), Paul (vice p-pal), Delores (vice principal), and David Phillips (Director of Special Education). Of the 27-30 people from Kennedy in attendance, most of them were white women. There were three men (Paul, Barry, who came in and sat between me and Claudia, and another man I have never seen before but I believe he is a middle school teacher because he talked a lot about the middle school model). There was one African-American, Delores.

Appendix B

Fieldnote Example #2: Rendered Speechless

From a classroom observation at Kennedy School on March 9, 2009:

The writing log books contained questions that students were asked to complete using the words John McSweeney had just gone over. For example, the word “capable” showed up in a sentence like, “I was picked for the soccer team because....” Students raised their hands to offer suggestions. Some of the responses missed the mark because they had nothing to do with being capable (e.g., “My family had money to pay for soccer,” “I have all the pads for playing soccer,” etc.). Eventually Jeannie Merrell led them to the idea that they were picked because they were “capable” and that their sentence should have something to do with their ability and/or soccer skills. There was a very tall African-American boy who raised his hand to share his sentence. Jeannie made more comments and then he raised his hand again. She said, “Your sentence is good, _____.” He said, “You haven’t even heard it yet.” She said, “Okay, what is your sentence?” Indeed it was a better sentence than the prior one. He danced a jig in his seat. At one point he stood up and made some dance moves and then sat back down. One of the girls sitting near him laughed to herself while she watched him.

I stood up and began to walk around the right side of the room (behind one of the students who John frequently supports). The one student on the far right wasn’t even looking at the sheet. One was doing the second page instead of the first. One had already done the first and had moved on to the second, and 2-3 students were following along with the rest of the class. I noticed Betta. She looked like she was trying to look like she was doing the activity. She had her pencil in hand and she was writing in a hunched over manner like she was trying to protect her work. She kept looking around at John and me as we moved across the room. At one point, she caught him looking at her and she said, “Whaaattttt? I’m doing my work.” John told Betta to stop whining. She really was using a long, drawn out whine. She was defensive.

Eventually John came over and stood next to me. He said, “Some of these kids are really struggling. Like Betta, she won’t be here next year. We’re going to do a change in placement for her. Her skills are low and she won’t be able to move around between classes by herself next year.”

“Where will she go?” I asked.

“Back into a self-contained classroom. She’s someone you could work with if you want to. Have you ever used Co-writer?”

“No.”

“I’ll show you.” We walked over to the opposite side of the classroom and John logged on to the classroom computer. He typed Betta’s name in wrong (with an e on the end), I think so that I would see when the answer typed is wrong.

O.C.: I feel dumbfounded. Speechless. What I expected to see was all students engaged in the worksheet, though at different levels of engagement. I expected to hear a teacher talk about how all students are learning in this classroom. But now, after a year of Betta being included, John can't think of anything else to do with her but throw her back into another self contained room? This was not what I expected to hear. What do I say? What do I do? Is this something that the university professors should know? If I tell them, do I run the risk of losing teachers that are willing to talk to me?

The time came for the groups to transition. Betta walked over to the window by the computer. I asked, "Are you Betta?" She said, "No." (Resistance). So I asked, "What's your name?" She didn't respond. She just looked away. Then she walked off.

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview Schedule for Teachers:

1. Tell me about your role within the school?
2. How have your roles and responsibilities changed this year as a result of All Means All Project?
3. What has this experience been like for you?
4. What strengths does Kennedy bring to inclusive whole school reform?
5. What are the challenges faced in the beginning of this process? And today? And what do you anticipate might be the challenges you face in the future?
6. What is the role of administrators in whole school reform?
7. How would you describe All Means All?
8. Can you share a story about this year that is particularly memorable?
9. If you were to talk to teachers and administrators about undertaking whole school inclusive reform, what would you tell them? What would be important for them to know?
10. Who else might you suggest I talk to about their experiences?

Interview Questions for Administrators:

1. How would you describe All Means All?
2. Tell me about your role as a district leader in the process of whole school reform.
3. How have your roles and responsibilities changed this year as a result of All Means All?
 - a. What has this experience been like for you?
 - b. In what ways is your district different from what it was before and what ways is it not that different?
4. What changes have been made to ensure that you are in compliance with the law in terms of IEP writing, staffing, etc.
5. What has been your biggest success story this year and your biggest challenge story?
 - a. Can you think of stories that are particularly memorable?

- b. Would you tell us a little about each of the schools in particular?
- 6. Can you talk with us about your vision for the district?
- 7. We'd like to understand how you are thinking about students being placed across schools. Tell us how you are approaching that. How does AMA fit into your thinking?
 - a. When the self-contained classes were closed at Kennedy last year, what happened to the kids? Did any of them leave Kennedy? I've heard that some of the formerly self-contained kids are no longer there—help me understand that?
 - b. Have any students been moved out of the school and to other programs in the district?
- 8. What happens when students leave Kennedy, after 8th grade? Will some students go back into self-contained classrooms for high school?
- 9. How are you thinking about the placement of administrators with respect to this effort?
 - a. Tell us about the decision to place new administrators at Kennedy, administrators who had not been part of the vote to move forward with AMA the prior year?
- 10. What discussions and/or negotiations with the union were necessary before moving forward with AMA?
 - a. What are some on-going conversations you have with them?
- 11. If you were to talk to other district administrators about undertaking whole school inclusive reform, what would you tell them? What would be important for them to know and be able to do?

Appendix D

Preliminary List of Codes & Potential Interview Questions

AMA preliminary codes & quotes-possible (sub)titles—Updated February 27, 2008

process

teachers talking about "process"

reflecting on process

"We are evolving"

"losing your special ed wings" (becoming just a teacher)

defining/making sense of AMA

the process is the model to replicate

sustaining the process

commitment-"If you're gonna do All Means All, do it with both feet!"

roles & responsibilities

district

principals/leadership

teachers/AMA teams

students

"Holy crap. Did they make a mistake?" (in student's placement b/c so many kids in class);

asked, "Am I gonna get to come back to this class?"

M.U.'s support/professor-researchers

paraprofessionals

related service personnel

parents

leadership needs

changing roles ("We are no longer special ed teachers. We are 'service providers' and we teach all kids.")

ownership

co-teaching/teaming

importance of communication

"One Big Family"

rapport

community building

collaboration

trusting each other

Staff (not AMA team members)

"buying into AMA"

resistance

Narratives available:

"Yes, but..." (our population of kids is "special" race & class differences)
 "I teach all kids. We're here for the kids. It's 'What's best for the kids?'"

Fears:

exclusion
 ability grouping
 staff (who has not bought in)
 time

Methods:

observation:

faculty meetings
 AMA team meetings
 planning meetings

participant observation:

Strategies for Inclusive Education (class for AMA teams)
 classrooms (Anna's at Kennedy; D's at W-W School)

interviews:

David Phillips (Director of Special Education)

Woodrow-Wilson:

Shaunda (principal at W-W)
 Michael (special ed teacher)
 Sara (special ed teacher)
 Melissa (special ed teacher/self-contained/originally resistant to AMA)
 Becky (regular ed teacher)

Kennedy:

Angela (principal)
 middle school vice principal
 Anna Martinez (spec. ed teacher)
 Anna's co-teacher

Bidwell:

principal
 teachers

M.U.:

Craig
 Melani
 Anthony

Potential interview questions:

Would you please describe for me what All Means All means to you?

What has this experience been like for you?

And for those you work with?

What do you think (reluctant and resistant) teachers and staff need to be able to embrace an inclusive philosophy for all?

What has been your experience with communication in the building this year?

Would you please comment on the rapport among staff in the building?

What are the challenges faced in the beginning of this process? And today? And what do you anticipate might be the challenges you face in the future? Is there any fear at work in this process?

What are the benefits to creating inclusive schools for all learners?

Appendix E

Codes and Subcodes

<u>Subjective Education</u> <u>Labels:</u> ED BD MR ODD	<u>Family Metaphors:</u> Marriage Divorce Childbirth Baby Babysteps Bundle of joy Functional/dysfunctional Family Growing pains	<u>Co-teaching:</u> --Positive talk (e.g., 2 teachers in each room, learning from each other) --Challenges giving up power not wanting to share personality conflicts trust shared space
<u>Feelings:</u> Fear Stress Uncertainty Misconceptions No one has patted us on the back	<u>Scheduling:</u> Common planning time Two teachers in the room	<u>State tests:</u> Alternative assessment Kids not wanting to leave classroom
<u>Communication:</u> On the fly Strategies Sharing Importance Among staff With parents	<u>Collaboration:</u> Relationships Rapport Trust Philosophy Ingredients for teaming Models used Supports	<u>Behavior:</u> Talk of behavior Discipline Language use Street culture Family trouble
<u>Legality/Compliance/Non-compliance:</u> IDEA Teacher of record Staffing designations (12:1:1; 15:1:1) Working within 2 systems (elementary & secondary)	<u>Union:</u> Contractual language Manipulation Building reps	<u>Belief Systems:</u> Buying in Not buying in Some kids don't fit the model Some kids are too low
<u>Resistance:</u> Teachers choosing not to participate Teachers transferred, retired Trying to move students	<u>Curriculum:</u> Modified Maintaining rigor	<u>Research methods:</u> Snowball sampling/interviews Negotiating my position Left out of the loop My involvement

<p><u>Teachers talk about students/kids:</u> Last year This year Growth (academic, social) Peer to peer Decrease in behavior Best for kids Some kids might not fit this model Retention Self-contained kids IEPs Transition plans High percentage of classified kids Classifying kids Letting go of worrying about kids Are their needs being met? Marquis DeMarcus</p>	<p><u>Managing Teaching Identities:</u> Professionalization & identity Changing roles of teachers We are all learners Reputation Gossip</p>	<p><u>Teaching Practice: Case loads</u> Use of time Role release Split between classrooms Ability grouping What do we do? What do teachers get out of this?</p>
<p><u>District & School Administrators' Roles:</u> Leading Evaluating Moving staff Expectations for district Other add-on programs Ownership Administrators' perceptions of staff Staffs' perceptions of administrators</p>	<p><u>Process:</u> Is this process replicable? Sustainable? Importance of meetings Reflecting Commitment Support Sharing stories Slow, flexible process Hard work No staff added Push in services Looking for feedback Work in progress Growing pains Evolving Losing special ed wings Barriers</p>	

References

- Allan, J. (2006). Conversations across disability and difference: Teacher education seeking inclusion. In Danforth, S. & Gabel, S.L. (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Allington, R. L. & McGill-Frazen, A. (1989). School response to reading failure: Instruction for chapter 1 and special education students in grades two, four, and eight. *Elementary School Journal* 89(5), 529-542.
- Artiles, A.J., Rueda, R., Salazar, J.J., Higareda, I. (2005). Within-Group diversity in minority disproportionate representation: English language learners in urban school districts. *Exceptional Children*, 71(3), 283-300.
- Biklen, D. P. & Burke, J. (2006). Presuming competence. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 39(2), 166-175.
- Biklen, D. (1992). *Schooling without labels: Parents, educators, and inclusive education*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Biklen, D. (1985). *Achieving the complete school: Strategies for effective mainstreaming*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*, 4th Ed. New York: Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Borman, G.D. (2009). *National efforts to bring reform to scale in America's high-poverty elementary and secondary schools: Outcomes and implications*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.
- Brantlinger, E. (1997). Using ideology: Cases of nonrecognition of the politics of research and practice in special education. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(4), 425-459.

- Brantlinger, E. (2001). Making decisions about special education placement: Do low-income parents have the information they need? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 20(2), 94-101.
- Burstein, N., Sears, S., Wilcoxon, A., Cabello, B. & Spagna, M. (2004). Moving toward inclusive practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25(2), 104-116.
- Carrington, S. & Robinson, R. (2006). Inclusive school community: Why is it so complex? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10(4-5), 323-334.
- Causton-Theoharis, J. & Theoharis, G. (2008). Creating inclusive schools for all students. *School Administrator*, 65(8), 24-31.
- Collins, K. M. (2003). *Ability profiling and school failure: One child's struggle to be seen as competent*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Comer, J. P. (1988). Educating poor minority children. *Scientific American*, 259(5), 42-48.
- Cooper, R. (1996). Detracking reform in an urban California High School: Improving the schooling experiences of African-American students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 65(2), 190-208.
- Cosier, M. (2010). *Exploring the relationship between inclusive education and achievement: New perspectives* (Doctoral dissertation). *Pro Quest Dissertations and Theses* (UMI No. 3429356). Retrieved April 30, 2011 from Dissertations and Theses at Syracuse University database.
- Davis, K. S. (2002). "Change is Hard": What science teachers are telling us about reform and teacher learning of innovative practices. *Science Education*, 87(1), 3-30.
- Danforth, S. & Smith, T.J. (2005). *Engaging troubling students: A constructivist approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Datnow, A. & Castellano, M. (2000). Teachers' Responses to Success for All: How Beliefs, Experiences, and Adaptations Shape Implementation. *American Educational Research Journal* 37(3), 775-799.
- Desimone, L. (2002). How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 433-479.
- Downing, J. E. & Peckham-Hardin, K. D. (2007). Inclusive education: What makes it a good education for students with moderate to severe disabilities? *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 32(1), 16-30.
- DuFour, R. (2007). In praise of top-down leadership. *School Administrator*, 64(10), 38-42.
- Erevelles, N. (2006). Deconstructing difference: Doing disability studies in multicultural educational context. In Danforth, S. & Gable, S. L. (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (pp. 363-378). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Falvey, M. A. & Givner, C. C. (2005). What is an inclusive school? In R. A. Villa & J. S. Thousand (Eds.), *Creating an inclusive school* (2nd ed., pp. 1-11). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Ferri, B.A. & Connor, D.J. (2006). *Reading resistance: Discourses of exclusion in desegregation & inclusion debates*. Washington, DC: Peter Lang.
- Fierros, E. G. & Conroy, J. W. (2002). Double jeopardy: An exploration of restrictiveness and race in special education. In Losen, D. J. & Orfield, G. (Eds.), *Racial inequality in special education* (pp. 39-70). MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fine, M., Anand, B., Hancock, M., Jordan, C., & Sherman, D. (Producers). (1998). *Off Track: Classroom privilege for all*. [videotape]. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Fitch, F. (2003). Inclusion, exclusion, and ideology: Special education students' changing sense of self. *Urban Review*, 35(3), 233-252.
- Frattura, E. & Capper, C.A. (2006). Segregated programs versus integrated comprehensive service delivery for all learners: Assessing the differences. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(6), 355-364.
- Friend, M. & Cook, L. (1992). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Fuchs, D. & Fuchs, L. S. (1994). Inclusive schools movement and the radicalization of special education reform. *Exceptional Children*, 60(4), 294-309.
- Fullan, M., Bertani, A., & Quinn, J. (2004). New lessons for districtwide reform. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7), 42-46.
- Fullan, M. G. & Miles, M. B. (1992). Getting reform right: what works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, p. 744-52.
- Gabel, S. (2006). Applying disability theory in educational policy: NIDRR's "New Paradigm of Disability" as a Cautionary Tale. In Danforth, S. & Gable, S. L. (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (pp. 179-200). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Gallagher, D. J. (2006). The natural hierarchy undone: Disability Studies' Contributions to Contemporary Debates in education. In Danforth, S. & Gable, S. L. (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (pp. 63-75). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Gartner, A. & Lipsky, D. K. (2004). Beyond special education. In Danforth, S. & Taft, S. D. (Eds.), *Crucial readings in special education* (pp. 190-210). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

- Giangreco, M. F., Dennis, R., Cloninger, C., Edelman, S., & Schattman, R. (1993). "I've counted Jon": Transformational Experiences of Teachers Educating Students with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 59
- Gifford, B. K. (2009). *"School reform is like cleaning out your garage": A case study of one school district's influence on student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (UMI No. 304862161). Retrieved November 15, 2010 from Dissertations and Theses database.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Glennan, Jr., T. K., Bodilly, S. J., Galegher, J. R. & Kerr, K. A. (2004). *Expanding the reach of education reforms: Perspectives from Leaders in the scale-up of educational interventions*. Arlington, VA: RAND Corporation.
- Goode, D. A. (1992). Who is Bobby?: Ideology and method in the discovery of a Down syndrome person's competence. In P. M. Ferguson, D. L. Ferguson, & S. J. Taylor (Eds.), *Interpreting disability: A qualitative reader* (pp. 197-212). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gurin, P., Nagda, B. A. & Lopex, G. E. (2004). The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(1), 17-34.
- Harry, B. & Anderson, M. G. (1994). The disproportionate placement of African American males in special education programs: A critique of the process. *Journal of Negro Education*, 63(4), 602-619.

- Harry, B., Hart, J. E., Klingner, J., Cramer, E. (2007). Response to Kauffkman, Mock, & Simpson, (2007): Problems related to underservice of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 34(3), 164-171.
- Harry, B. & Klinger, J. (2006). *Why are so many minority students in special education?: Understanding race & disability in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hayman, R. L. Jr. (1998). *The Smart Culture: Society, Intelligence, and Law*. New York: NYU Press.
- Hosp, J. L. & Reschly, D. J. (2004). Disproportionate representation of minority students in special education: Academic, demographic, and economic predictors. *Exceptional Children*, 70(2), 185-199.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 2004, P.L. 108-446, 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5). Retrieved on April 2, 2010 from:
<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/.root,regs,300,B,300%252E114>,
- Kalyanpur, M., Harry, B. & Skrtic, T. (2000). Equity and Advocacy Expectations of Culturally Diverse Families' Participation in Special Education. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 47(2), 119-136.
- Karagiannis, A. (2000). Soft disabilities in schools: Assisting or confining at risk children and youth? *Journal of Educational Thought* 34, 113-134.
- Kauffman, J. M., Wills Lloyd, J., Baker, J., & Riedel, T. M. (1995). Inclusion of all students with emotional or behavioral disorders? Let's think again. *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(7), 542-546.
- Kent-Walsh, J.E. & Light, J.C. (2003). General education teachers' experiences with inclusion of students who use augmentative and alternative communication. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 19, 104-124.

- Kliewer, C. (1998). *Schooling children with Down syndrome: Toward an understanding of possibility*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Kluth, P. (2003). *"You're going to love this kid!" Teaching students with autism in the inclusive classroom*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Kluth, P., Straut, D. M., & Biklen, D. P. (2003). *Access to academics for all students: Critical approaches to inclusive curriculum, instruction, and policy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kluth, P. & Chandler-Olcott, K. (2008). *"A Land we can share": Teaching literacy to students with autism*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Kress, J. S. & Elias, M. J. (2006). Building learning communities through social and emotional learning: Navigating the rough seas of implementation. *ASCA Professional School Counseling*, 10(1), 102-107.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lieberman, L. M. (1996). Preserving special education...for those who need it. In Stainback, W. & Stainback, S. (Eds.), *Controversial issues confronting special education: divergent perspectives*, 2nd ed. (pp. 16-27). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Linton, S. (2004). Divided society. In Danforth, S. & Taft, S. D. (Eds.), *Crucial readings in special education* (pp. 148-162). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Lipsky, D.K. & Gartner, A. (1998). Taking inclusion into the future. *Educational Leadership*, 56(2), 78-81.

- Lipsky, D. K. & Gartner, A. (2004). Equity requires inclusion: the future for all students with disabilities. In Mitchell, D. (Ed.), *Special educational needs and inclusive education: Major themes in education*. NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Losen, D. J. & Orfield, G. (2002). *Racial inequality in special education*. MA: Harvard University Press.
- McGregor, G. & Volelsberg, R.T. (1998). Inclusive Schooling Practices: Pedagogical and Research Foundations: A synthesis of the literature that informs best practices about inclusive schooling. Retrieved 5 September 2009 from:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/64/dd.pdf
- McLeskey, J. & Waldron, N. L. (2000). Inclusive schools in action: making differences ordinary. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- McLeskey, J. & Waldron, N. L. (2002). School Change and Inclusive Schools: Lessons Learned from Practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(1), 65-72.
- McLeskey, J. & Waldron, N. L. (2006). Comprehensive school reform and inclusive schools. *Theory into Practice*, 45(3), 269-278.
- National Association of State Boards of Education (2008). Public Policy Positions 2008, Section J. Students with Special Needs, Number 2. Retrieved on December 16, 2010 from:
<http://nasbe.org/index.php/about/37-policy-positions/73-public-policy-positions?showall=1>
- New York State Education Department. Regulations of the Commissioner of Education - Parts 200 and 201. Internet. Available from
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/lawsregs/part200.htm>; accessed 12, October, 2010.

- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Nunnery, J. A. (1998). Reform ideology and the locus of development problems in educational restructuring: Enduring lessons from studies of educational innovation. *Education and Urban Society*, 30(3), 277-295.
- Payne, C. M. (2008). So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Peterson, J. M. & Hittie, M. M. (2003). *Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all learners*. New York: Allyn & Bacon Publishers.
- Reschly, A. L. & Christenson, S. L. (2006). Prediction of dropout among students with mild disabilities: A case for the inclusion of student engagement variables. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(5), 276-292.
- Rose, D. H., Harbour, W. S., Johnston, C. S., Daley, S. G., & Abarbanell, L. (2006). Universal design for learning in postsecondary education: Reflections on principles and their application. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 19(2), 17.
- Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 55-81.
- Ryndak, D. L., Reardon, R., Benner, S. R. & Ward, T. (2007). Transitioning to and sustaining district-wide inclusive services: A 7-year study of a district's ongoing journey and its accompanying complexities. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 32(4), 228-246.
- Salisbury, C. L. (2006). Principals' perspectives on inclusive elementary schools. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(1), 70-82.

- Shildrick, M. (1997). *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism, and (Bio)ethics*. NY: Routledge.
- Sindelar, P. T., Shearer, D. K., Yendol-Hoppey, D., & Liebert, T. W. (2006). The Sustainability of inclusive school reform. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 72(3), 317-331.
- Slavin, R. E., & Madden, N. A. (2001, April). Reducing the Gap: Education for all and the achievement of African American and Latino students. Paper presented at the AERA 2001 Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association in Seattle, WA.
- Smith, A. (2001). A faceless bureaucrat ponders special education, disability, and white privilege. *JASH* 26(3), 180-188.
- Smith, J. & Wohlstetter, P. (2006). Understanding the different faces of partnering: a typology of public-private partnerships. *School Leadership and Management*, 26(3), 249-268.
- Smith, T. J. (1997). Storying moral dimensions of disordering: Teacher inquiry into the social construction of severe emotional disturbance. Paper presented the American Educational Research Association annual meeting (Chicago, IL, March 1997). Retrieved on January 6, 2010 from:
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/bc/46.pdf
- Spillane, J. P. (1998, Spring). *Challenging instruction for "All Students": Policy, Practitioners, and Practice*. Paper appeared as an Institute for Policy Research Working Paper, Northwestern University.

- Stainback, S., Stainback, W., & Ayres, B. (1996). Schools as inclusive communities. In Stainback, W. & Stainback, S. (Eds.), *Controversial issues confronting special education: divergent perspectives*, 2nd Ed. (pp. 31-43). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case Studies. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd ed. CA: Sage Publications.
- Schwartz, I. S. & Green, C. (2001). Inclusive Schools: Good for Kids: Reconsidering our definition of inclusion and redefining its outcomes for all children. Retrieved on October 20, 2011 from the IRIS Center at: <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html>
- Taylor, S. J. (2006). Before it had a name: Exploring the historical roots of disability studies in education. In Danforth, S. & Gable, S. L. (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (pp. xiii-xxiii). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Taylor, S. J. & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Thousand, J. S. & Villa, R. A. (2005). Organizational supports for change toward inclusive schooling. In R. A. Villa and J.S. Thousand (Eds.) *Creating an inclusive school* (2nd ed., pp. 57-96). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, C. A. & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., & Wehmeyer, M. L., (2010). *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in today's schools*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia: A century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., (2005). The rationales for creating and maintaining inclusive schools. In R. A. Villa & J. S. Thousand (Eds.), *Creating an inclusive school* (2nd ed., pp. 41-56). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S., & Nevin, A.I. (2008). *A guide to co-teaching: Practical tips for facilitating student learning*, 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Villa, R., Thousand, J. S., Meyers, H., & Nevin, A. (1996). Teacher and administrator perceptions of heterogeneous education. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 29-45.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

NAME OF AUTHOR: Nicole M. DeClouette

PLACE OF BIRTH: Yuba City, California

DATE OF BIRTH: March 1, 1972

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of California, Berkeley
Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

DEGREES AWARDED:

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, 1997, U.C. Berkeley
Certificate of Advanced Study in Disability Studies, 2008, Syracuse University

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Certificate of University Teaching, Future Professoriate Project, May 2009

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education & Educational Leadership, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA

August 2010—present

Instructor, English Department, Onondaga Community College

Fall 2008—Spring 2010, Syracuse, NY

Taught Reading 140 Vocabulary and Learning Strategies for Health Sciences. Students learned 220 Latin and Greek word parts and study skills strategies specific to health science majors.

Reading & Study Skills Tutor, Onondaga Community College

August 2001—May 2010, Syracuse, NY

Provided reading, writing, and study skills support to college-aged students enrolled in a developmental reading and study skills strategies course.

Learning Specialist, Department of Athletics, Syracuse University

January 2009—November 2009, Syracuse, NY

Met twice weekly with student-athletes who have learning disabilities to work on reading fluency and reading comprehension, verbal communication/interviewing techniques, improving grammar skills, and developing college study strategies.

Instructor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, Syracuse University

Spring 2009, Syracuse, NY

Co-taught CFE/DSP/SOC 300 Representations of Ability and Disability, with Dean Douglas Biklen. Students explored representations of dis/ability in popular culture, analyzed how disability “works” metaphorically & juxtaposed various ways of understanding disability.

Students developed reflective skills to identify and examine assumptions, values, and beliefs about dis/ability and discussed ways to resist discrimination and negative representations.

Instructor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, Syracuse University

Spring 2007 & 2008, Syracuse, NY

Prepared weekly lecture material for undergraduate students enrolled in EDU 203—The Study of Elementary and Special Education Teaching.

Teaching Assistant/Coordinator, Department of Teaching and Leadership, Syracuse University

Fall 2006 & 2007, Syracuse, NY

Taught weekly discussion sessions for undergraduate students enrolled in EDU 203—The Study of Elementary and Special Education Teaching; coordinated and supervised field placements for 60 students enrolled in EDU 201—Practicum in Pre-K Inclusive Education.

Research Associate to the Dean, School of Education, Syracuse University

Summer 2009

Web content writing for the new School of Education website.

Fall 2008

Planned and coordinated the itinerary for three professors from Nara University in Japan to visit 10 inclusive school programs in Syracuse; co-produced a documentary short; developed an undergraduate course in Disability Studies CFE/DSP/SOC Representations of Ability and Disability.

Summer 2007

Revised introductory course for inclusive education majors; prepared material for Inclusion Institute website; conducted research for Department of Education grant proposal.

Summer 2006

Researched and co-wrote a funded U.S. Department of Education grant proposal, Preparation of Leadership Personnel CFDA 84.325D; conducted additional research on possible grant opportunities.

Instructor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, Syracuse University

Fall 2004—Spring 2006, Syracuse, NY

Co-taught SPE 312—Practicum in Disabilities with Eugene Marcus and Keonhee Kim; supervised practicum placements with college-age students with disabilities.

Coordinator, OnCampus Program, Syracuse University

Fall 2004—Spring 2006, Syracuse, NY

Co-coordinated a collaborative educational project between Syracuse University and Syracuse City School District; supervised partnerships between six OnCampus students with educational disabilities and 30 university students; created OnCampus website.

Research Assistant, Center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies, Syracuse University and University of Iowa

Summer 2005—Syracuse, NY

Researched and evaluated international models of knowledge exchange to be applied to field of disability; grant submission; researched consumer self-direction through individual budgeting.

Assistant Teacher, Jowonio Inclusive Preschool

November 2000—August 2004, Syracuse, NY

Created environment (through differentiated preschool curriculum, built-in supports, clinical problem-solving for individual children & groups) in which children of all ability levels were included as full community members and learners; classroom advocate for two children each year, responsible for teaching & updating individual education plans (IEP), assessments, reports, & transition-to-kindergarten process.

